LOST CITY OF GOLD

Who hunted for El Dorado?

DUKE OF DEBAUCHERY

Sordid life of the Marquis de Sade

ALL ABOUT HISTORY

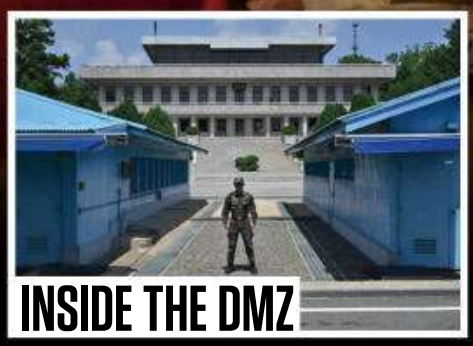
CRUEL TO BE KIND

KING JOHN

Was this maligned monarch the monster of mythology or a misunderstood reformer?

ON THE BRINK OF WAR

The NATO exercise that nearly ended the world

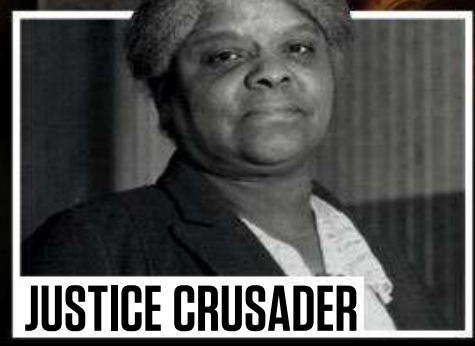


INSIDE THE DMZ

Explore the divide of North and South Korea

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER JESUS DIED?

Tracking the Apostles as they spread a new faith



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How Ida B Wells gave a voice to the oppressed

FUTURE

ISSUE 114

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A stonemason working on the restoration of a monument to the sealing of the Magna Carta, which now sits on Egham's High Street, near Runnymede

Welcome

What made King John a villain? As we approached our cover feature this issue, we wanted to examine this infamous English king with this key question in mind. The list of trespasses against his name is long, but when it comes down to it, it would seem to me that going back on his word is what really cemented his reputation. He betrayed public trust, even if in those days the 'public' only meant a few powerful landowners.

Like so many rulers of this era, he very likely didn't see it that way. He had a divine right to rule and saying differently was an affront to God. Reneging on his deal with the barons of England, sealing and then refuting the Magna Carta, was a lesser offence than diluting the power of his throne, at least according to his world view. If he had held firm to his beliefs from the start, would he have been more or less hated later? We'll never know the answer to that question, but it's an intriguing one to ponder.

All that being said, we are delighted to have Dr Nick Barratt join us to tackle the subject of King John this issue, as well as Prof. Patricia Schechter who offers her insight into the life of journalist and activist Ida B Wells, and historian Mathew Lyons who takes a look at the history of the hunt for El Dorado, the legendary lost city of gold. I hope you enjoy their features and the rest of the issue.

Jonathan Gordon
Editor

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Future Publishing Limited
Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

Editorial
Editor **Jonathan Gordon**
jonathan.gordon@futurenet.com
Art Editor **Kym Winters**
Features Editor **Callum McKelvie**
Production Editor **Iain Noble**
Editor in Chief **Tim Williamson**
Senior Art Editor **Duncan Crook**

Contributors
Nick Barratt, Martyn Conterio, Catherine Curzon, Murray Dahm, Ben Gazur, Mike Haskew, Mallory James, Mathew Lyons, Kate Marsh, Aleksandar Pavlovic, Patricia Schechter, David Williamson

Cover images
Joe Cummings, Alamy, Getty Images

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Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Advertising Director **Matthew Johnston**
matthew.johnston@futurenet.com
07974 408083
Account Manager **Garry Brookes**
garry.brookes@futurenet.com
020 3970 4176

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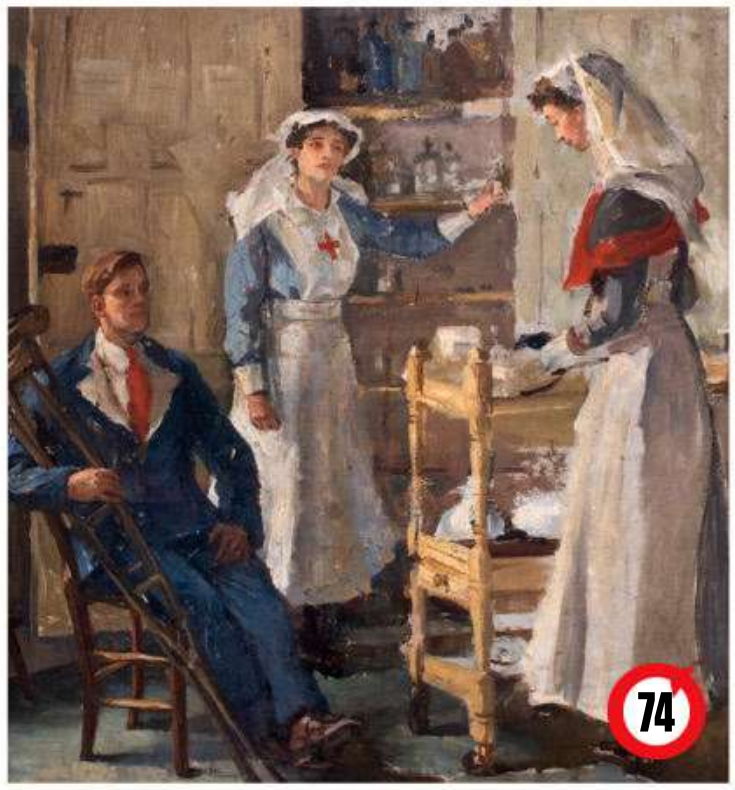

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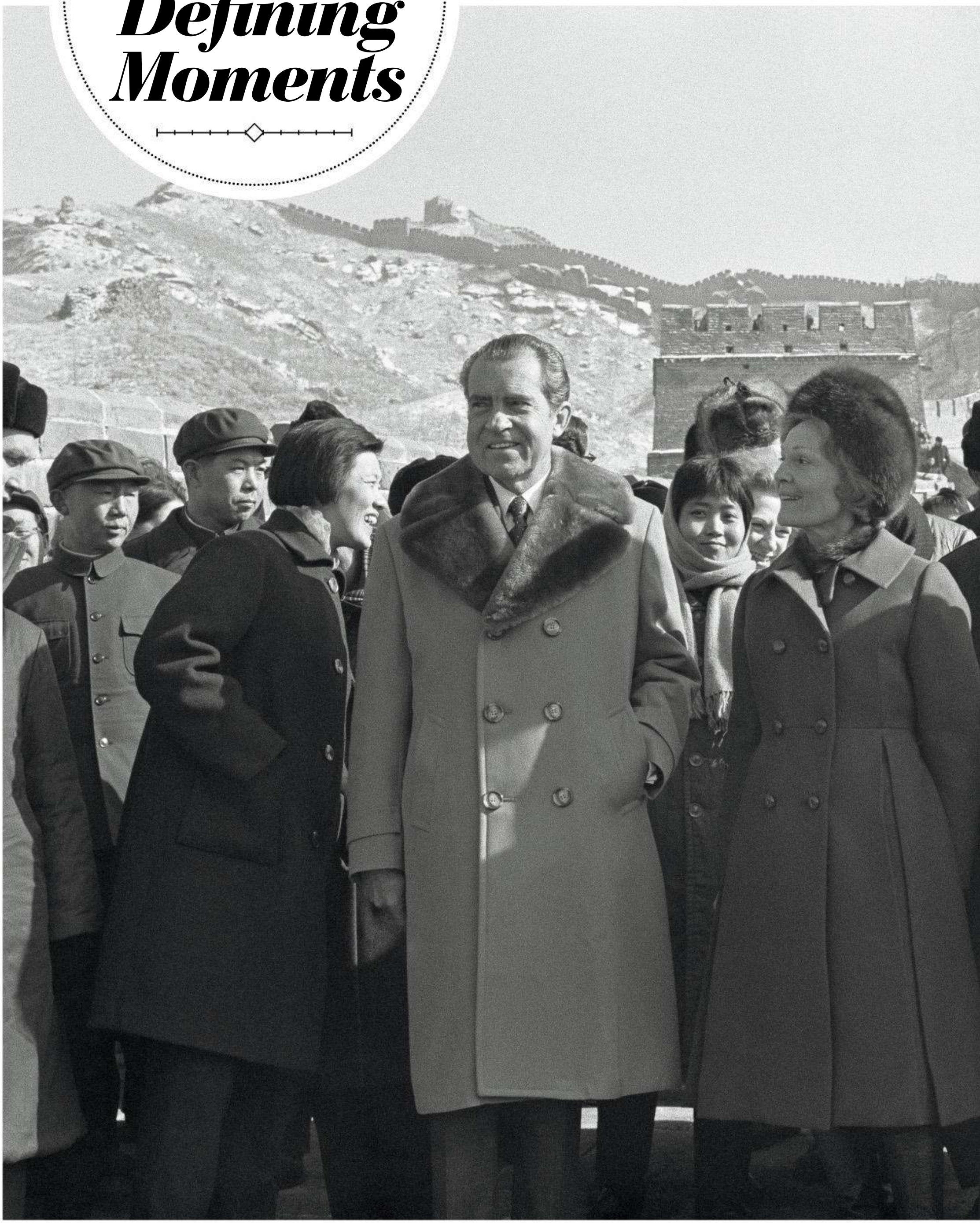
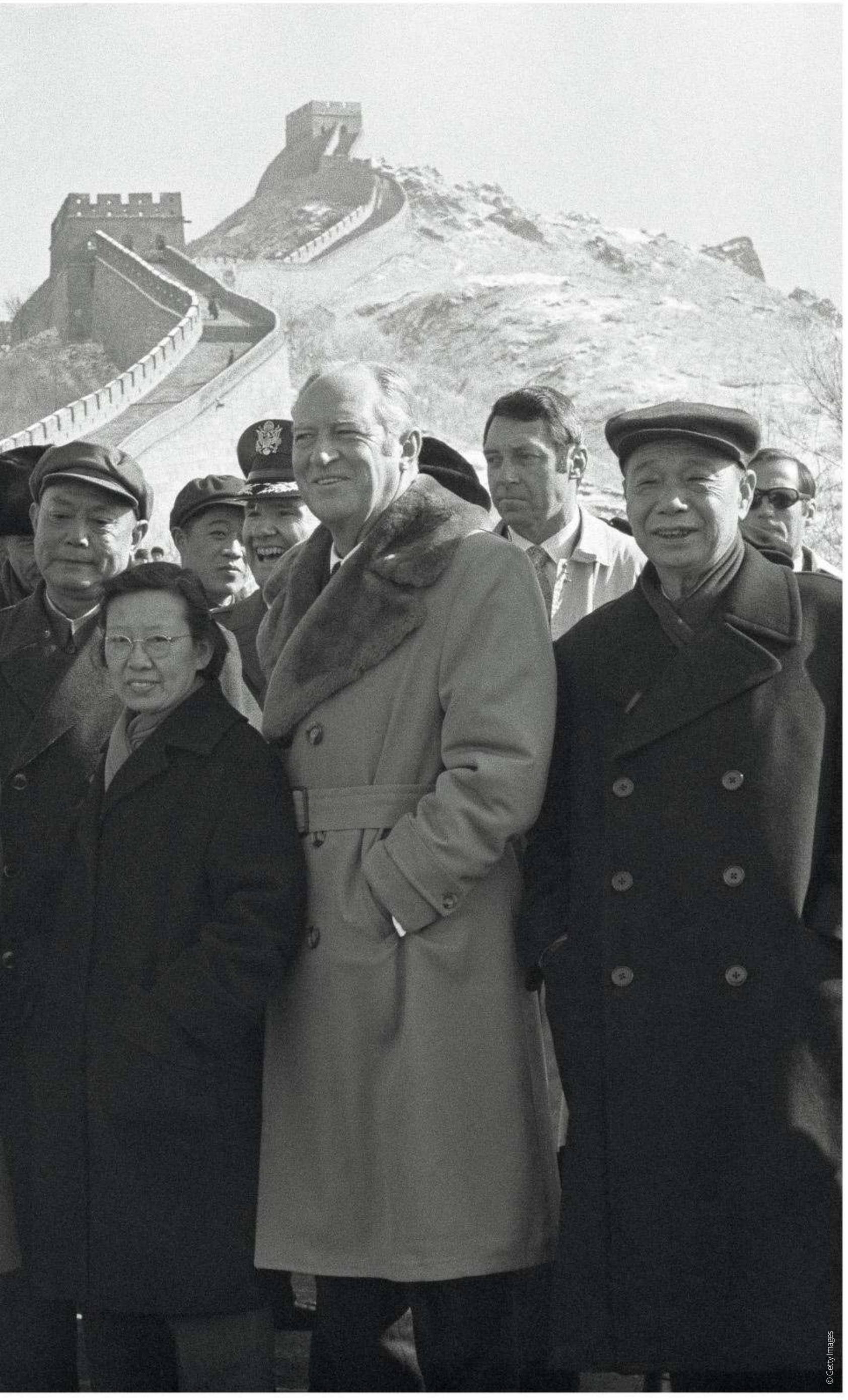
King John

Was this maligned monarch the monster of mythology or a misunderstood reformer?

Defining Moments





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21 February 1972

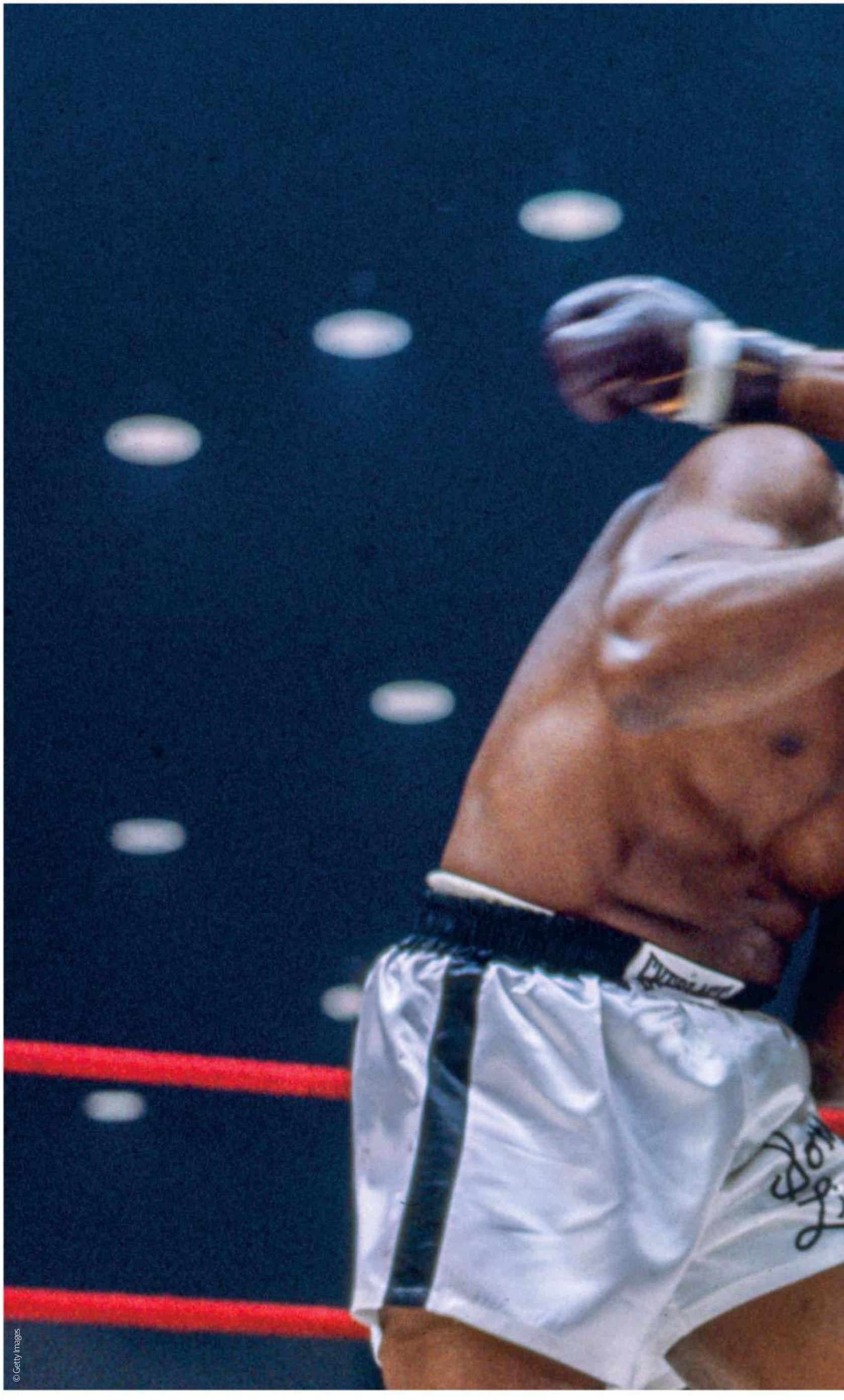
PRESIDENT NIXON VISITS CHINA

On 21 February 1972, American President Richard Nixon arrived in the People's Republic of China for a week-long visit, ending 25 years of isolation between the two countries. During the trip Nixon met with Chairman Mao Zedong and its aftermath would result in an opening of trade with China, as well as a thawing of Cold War tensions between the two nations.

25 February 1964

MUHAMMAD ALI KNOCKS OUT SONNY LISTON

On 25 February 1964, 22-year-old Cassius Clay shocked the boxing world when he defeated the world heavyweight champion Sonny Liston. During the fight Liston hurt his shoulder and was in so much pain he failed to answer the bell for the 7th round. Clay, who changed his name to Muhammad Ali the following month, was catapulted to stardom and he would soon become the world's most famous boxer.



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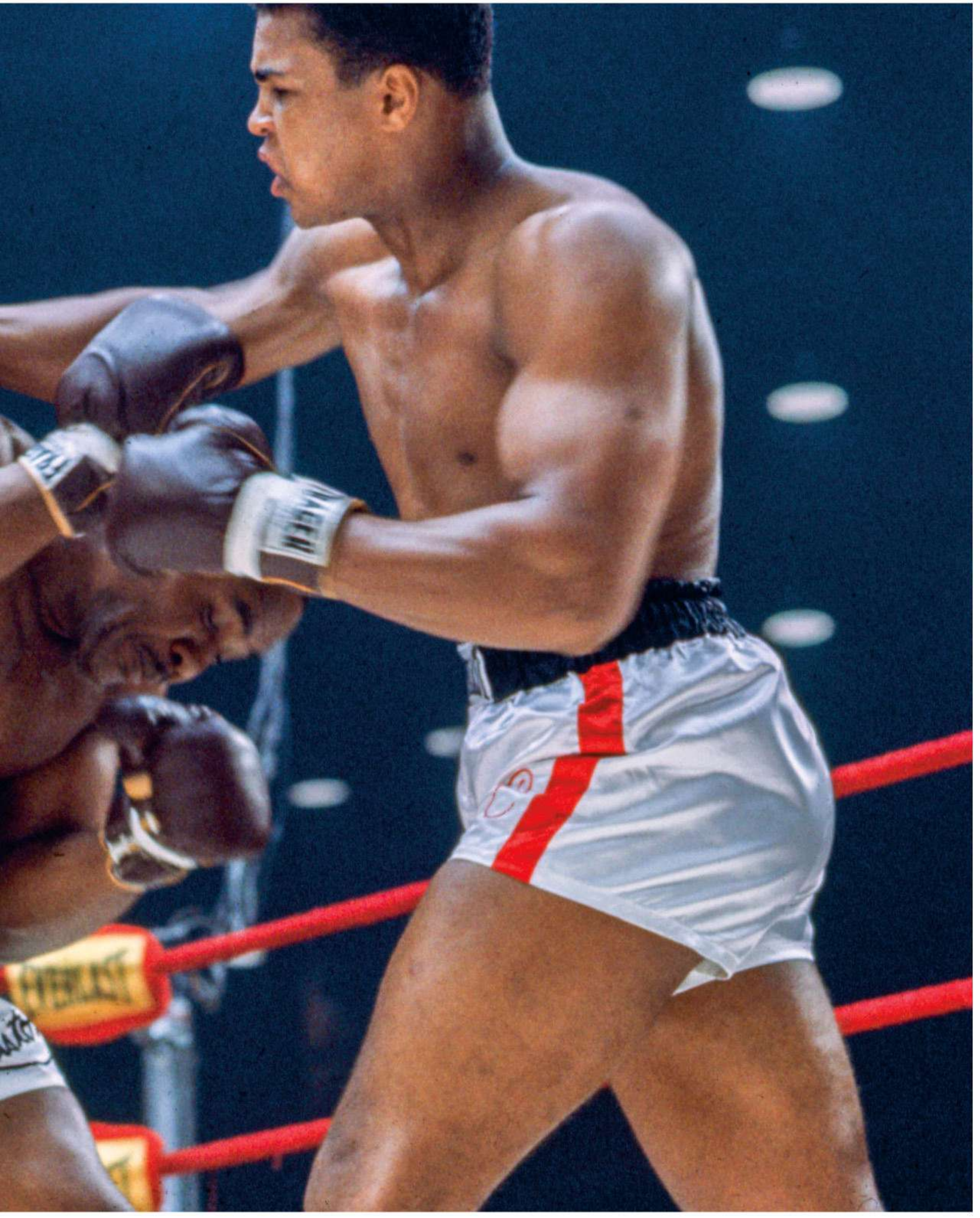
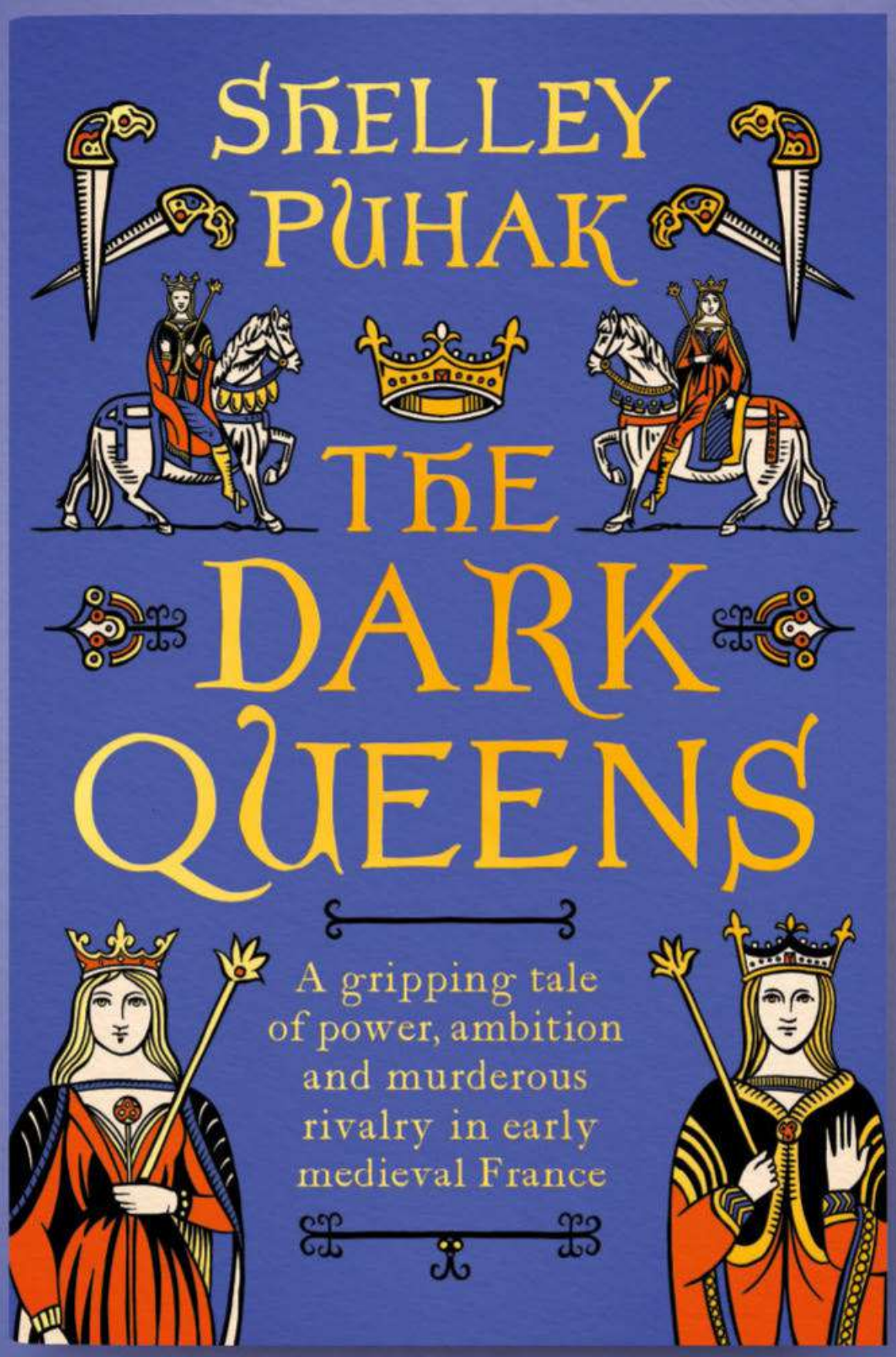


TWO FEARLESS QUEENS:

ONE GRIPPING TALE OF POWER, AMBITION AND MURDEROUS RIVALRY IN EARLY MEDIEVAL FRANCE.



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THE KOREAN WAR

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INSIDE THE DMZ

ANATOMY OF A KPA SOLDIER

KOREAN WAR LEADERS

WHY FIGHT IN KOREA?

Main image source: © Getty Images

Written by Murray Dahm, Mike Haskew, Callum McKelvie

Key Events

SEP 1950

LANDING AT INCHON

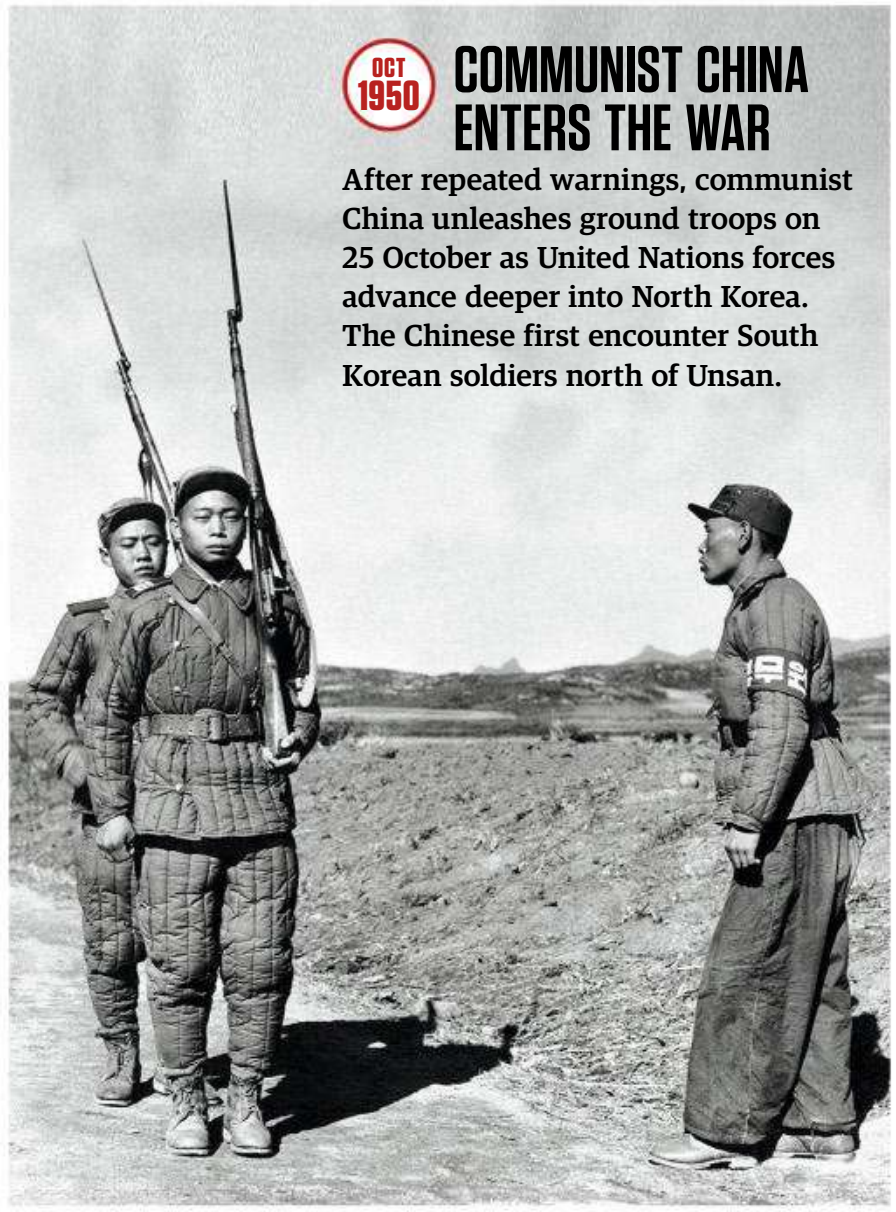
After United Nations forces are squeezed into the Pusan Perimeter by the North Korean offensive, General Douglas MacArthur executes an amphibious landing at the port of Inchon on 15 September. Coinciding with an Eighth Army offensive from Pusan, the UN X Corps advances.

General MacArthur requested the authority to use nuclear weapons against communist forces

OCT 1950

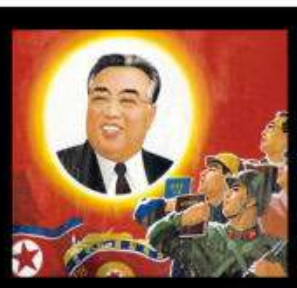
COMMUNIST CHINA ENTERS THE WAR

After repeated warnings, communist China unleashes ground troops on 25 October as United Nations forces advance deeper into North Korea. The Chinese first encounter South Korean soldiers north of Unsan.



NORTH KOREAN COMMUNIST PARTY ESTABLISHED 1945

With Kim Yong-bom as its first president, the Workers' Party of Korea is established in October. Within weeks, the Soviets elevate Kim Il-sung as his replacement.

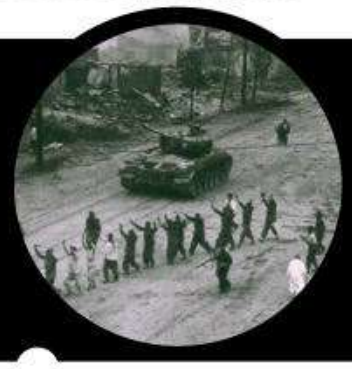


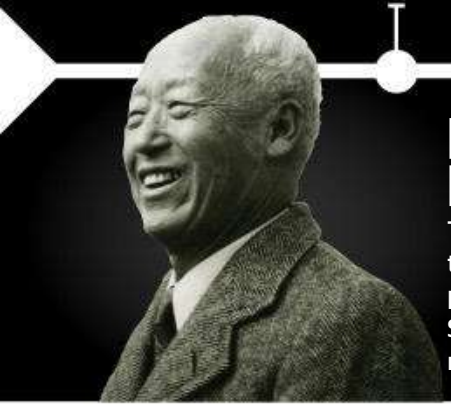
UNITED NATIONS VOTES TO INTERVENE June 1950

Two days after the North Korean invasion, United Nations Security Council Resolution 83 declares the attack a breach of peace, recommending military assistance for South Korea.

UN FORCES LIBERATE SEOUL SEP 1950

Maintaining their offensive towards the North Korean frontier, UN forces recapture the South Korean capital of Seoul in late September.





JUNE 1950

REPUBLIC OF KOREA ESTABLISHED 1948

The Republic of Korea is established three years after the peninsula is partitioned at the 38th parallel. Syngman Rhee is the pro-Western nation's first president.

SEP 1950

TASK FORCE SMITH ENGAGES July 1950

The first US Army combat formation introduced to Korea, Task Force Smith, is decimated by overwhelming North Korean forces during the Battle of Osan on 5 July.

UN FORCES CROSS 38TH PARALLEL OCT 1950

Troops of the Republic of Korea, followed within days by elements of the US Eighth Army, cross the 38th parallel into North Korea in early October.

JUNE 1950

KPA INVADES THE SOUTH

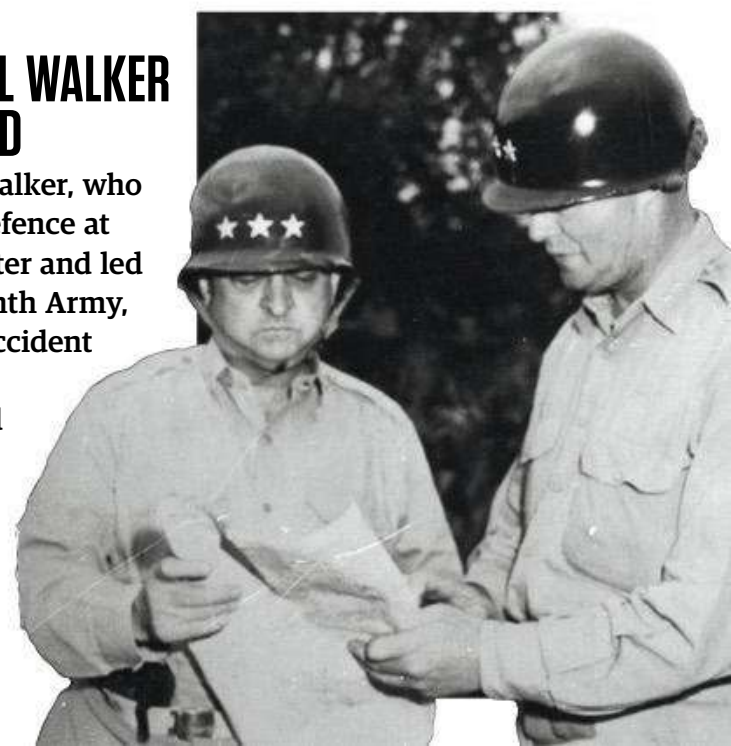
On 25 June, troops of the communist Korean People's Army cross the 38th parallel and invade South Korea in an effort to unify the Korean peninsula by force. The invasion triggers United Nations intervention, with US troops in the vanguard.

The Soviet Union did not vote on UN Security Council Korea resolutions due to a boycott

DEC 1950

GENERAL WALKER IS KILLED

General Walton Walker, who fought a skilful defence at the Pusan Perimeter and led the American Eighth Army, is killed in a car accident on 23 December. Walker is replaced by Lieutenant General Matthew B Ridgway.



JULY 1953

ARMISTICE IS CONCLUDED

The 1953 armistice was a cease-fire, and a state of war still exists between the two Koreas

Armistice documents signed at 10 am on 27 July end the fighting, although a state of war exists to this day. Combat operations halt 12 hours after signing, and each side begins withdrawal 2km from the cease-fire line.

OCT 1950

UN TROOPS CAPTURE PYONGYANG OCT 1950

The North Korean capital of Pyongyang falls to soldiers of the South Korean 1st Division and the US Army's 1st Cavalry Division on 19 October.

DEC 1950

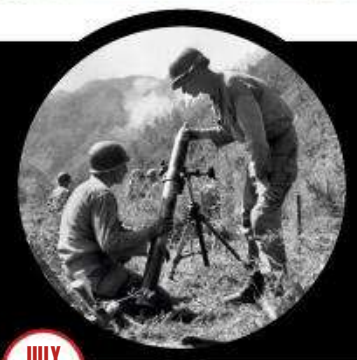
COMMUNIST FORCES RETAKE SEOUL JAN 1951

On 4 January, communist forces reenter the South Korean capital of Seoul as the US Eighth Army pulls back to a line 65km to the south.

FEB 1951

REACHING THE RIDGES SEP 1951

Amid a series of limited offensive actions, the US 2nd Infantry Division and supporting tanks occupy Bloody Ridge and Heartbreak Ridge in Gangwon Province in September.

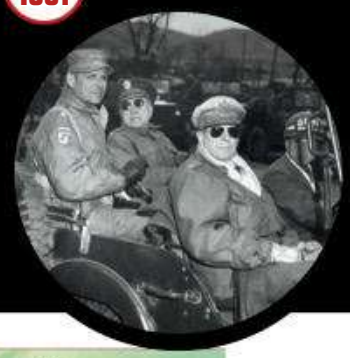


OCT 1950

STAND AT THE CHOSIN RESERVOIR NOV-DEC 1950

Driven back by the massive Chinese winter offensive, US Marines and Army troops hold off the Chinese at the Chosin Reservoir as UN forces retreat toward Hungnam and evacuation.

FEB 1951



PRESIDENT TRUMAN RELIEVES MACARTHUR APRIL 1951

After serious clashes over the conduct of the war, President Harry Truman relieves General Douglas MacArthur of command of UN troops in Korea.

OCT 1951

FIGHTING AND FUTILITY 1952

During the spring and summer, UN and communist forces battle for otherwise nondescript high ground, capturing Old Baldy and Pork Chop Hill only to abandon them months later.

JULY 1953

FEB 1951

VICTORY AT THE BATTLE OF CHIPYONG-NI

Signalling the high water mark of the communist offensive, United Nations forces win one of the decisive battles of the Korean War. Chipyong-ni takes place 13-15 February, and within three days reports of enemy withdrawal along the entire front are confirmed.

OCT 1951

ARMISTICE TALKS RESUME

After initial peace talks at Kaesong fail and the war comes to a stalemate in the field, armistice negotiations resume on 25 October at the village of Panmunjom. Yet the Korean War drags on for nearly two more years.

All images: © Alamy

JOINT SECURITY AREA

North and South Korea
1953 – present

On the border between North and South Korea lies the demilitarised zone, more commonly known as the DMZ, a vast area which incorporates land from both sides and works as a buffer between the two nations. Created as part of the 1953 ceasefire agreement, the DMZ is 240km long and 4km wide. Within this vast space on the 38th parallel is a small area which was once the location of the small village of Panmunjom. Now known as the Joint Security Area (though the JSA is interchangeably used to describe both Panmunjom and other buildings in this area) this was the location of the initial 1953 conference between representatives of the United Nations, South Korea, North Korea and Chinese forces.

In the decades since its establishment the Joint Security Area developed a reputation as one of the most frightening places on Earth. For years the area was used for tense prisoner exchanges and witnessed a number of defections. Manned by soldiers from both sides, it was the site of several incidents that nearly plunged both nations back into full-blown war.

Several times during 2018, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-In met in the JSA in order to ease tensions between the two countries. On 19 September that year the two leaders signed an agreement that stated that the area would be demilitarised with guard posts, weapons, landmines and the majority of personnel removed from the area and instead it would become available to tourism. Today the site is administered by the United Nations Command and each side is permitted to have no more than 35 personnel on duty at any given time.

BRIDGE OF NO RETURN

Famed as the site of tense prisoner exchanges between North and South Korea, this bridge crosses the MDL and takes its name from the ultimatum given to prisoners before they crossed over. They could either remain in the country in which they were held prisoner, or return to their homeland. Following the 1976 axe incident, in which two US soldiers were killed by North Korean troops, the bridge was no longer used.

FELLED TREE SITE

In 1976 American soldiers were sent to trim the branches of a tree that was said to be obstructing the view of South Korean observation posts. As work began, 15 North Korean troops appeared on the other side of the bridge and demanded work stop. When it did not, the troops attacked and two American soldiers were killed with the blunt ends of their axes. As a result a massive military operation was undertaken with the intent of cutting down the tree, and this time no North Korean intervention occurred.

Kim Jong-Un (left) and Moon Jae-In shake hands over the Military Demarcation Line on 27 April 2018

©Getty Images

THE SUNKEN GARDEN

A mostly decorative area as its name suggests, in 1984 a defection gone wrong led to a number of Korean People's Army (KPA) soldiers becoming trapped in the garden during a firefight. Vasiliy Yakovlevich Matuzok worked as a Soviet translator and was visiting the JSA when he ran across the Military Demarcation Line. Pursued by KPA soldiers, troops from the south returned fire as Matuzok made his escape.

MILITARY DEMARCATION LINE

The Military Demarcation Line (MDL), running through the centre of the DMZ, is the border which separates North and South Korean territory. The line extends across the country and even into the sea, where the often-disputed Northern Limit Line maritime border separates the two countries' waters.

UNIFICATION PAVILION

Also known as Tongilak, this is a single-storey building built in 1985 as the North's equivalent to Peace House, hosting inter-Korean talks and meetings. In 2018 the second round of talks between Kim Jong-Un and Moon Jae-In took place at this location.

PEACE HOUSE

Constructed on the South Korean side of the JSA in 1989, Peace House was a conference centre designed for the purpose of encouraging dialogue between the two countries, with over 100 talks having been held within its walls by 2018. It is also the location of the JSA's hotline between the two nations.

GUARD TOWERS

Due to the tensions surrounding the JSA, watch towers were in position keeping a close eye on the border, either for defectors or possible incursions. One of the conditions of the 2018 agreement between Kim Jong-Un and Moon Jae-In was that all guard posts would be unmanned and eventually removed.

FREEDOM HOUSE

Built in 1965 on the South Korean side of the JSA as a pair of two-storey structures with a pavilion between them, it was later rebuilt as a much more modern facility. The building is used for talks and is the location where US President Donald Trump met with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un in June 2019.

BLUE HUTS

The JSA's three distinctive blue huts straddle the border between the North and South, with the centre being the Military Armistice Commission conference room. Inside this room is a conference table whose centre marks the middle of the border – both sides meet here for talks. If visiting as a tourist, then this is the only area where you will be allowed to cross over into what is officially North Korean territory.

PHANMUN PAVILION

Originally constructed as a two-storey building in 1969 (though later expanded to three), Phanmun Pavilion is located on the northern side of the JSA, roughly 80 metres north of Freedom House. It was the building Kim Jong-Un exited to reach the MDL during the 2018 talks with Moon Jae-In.

Illustration by Adrian Mann

Anatomy

KOREAN PEOPLE'S ARMY SOLDIER

North Korea
1953

INSIGNIA

In the centre of the hat would be a metal badge featuring a five-pointed red star (recognised as an international symbol of communism) on a circular gold disc. Following the war the badge would become more elaborate with embossed and decorative edges.

CAP

The cap also has a cloth chin-strap and a flexible cloth peak. The cap is striking due to the relatively lightweight design, however this may reflect the fact that KPA soldiers were recruited primarily from communist guerrillas.

TUNIC

The KPA shirt or tunic was similar in style to the Russian 'gymnastiorka' style of tunic and crafted out of relatively lightweight material. With a scarcity of protective clothing and equipment, the KPA's strength came primarily from its Soviet-inspired ideology, which was drilled into the troops through rigorous training.

BELT AND TROUSERS

The belts were usually constructed out of brown leather, with a solid brass buckle. Officers may have had a shoulder holster or belt holster as a symbol of status. These would support olive green trousers with ankle tapes in order to prevent any loose material from tripping up the soldier.

WINTER WEAR

Due to the lightness of the standard uniforms (the outfit you see would have been worn during the summer months) the Chinese military also supplied the KPA with winter wear. This included winter hats, coats and padded or quilted combat jackets which replaced the lighter ones.

SOVIET PPSh-41 GUN

Nicknamed the 'burp gun', this sub-machine gun was widely used during the Second World War, and it's estimated that some six million were produced. After being retired from Soviet use the PPSh-41 was exported and used by the KPA. Chinese forces also used a close copy of the PPSh-41 during the war – the Type 50.

SHOES

During the summer months, soldiers of the KPA wore relatively light canvas-based footwear, of which a variety of different styles were used. In principle these were not unlike sports shoes or trainers, being laced and with green rubber providing support around the edge and off-white rubber soles.

Illustration by: Kevin McGivern

Historical Treasures

KOREAN WAR MEDAL

This UN medal was given to those who fought for South Korea South Korea, 1950-55

The United Nations unanimously passed Resolution 82 to condemn the invasion of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) by North Korea on 25 June, 1950. Resolution 83 was then passed on 27 June, committing the members of the United Nations to defend the Republic of Korea. Led by forces from the United States, many member states of the United Nations – no matter how small – committed forces to the conflict.

On 12 December 1950, the United Nations instituted a service medal, the United Nations Service Medal for Korea (UNKM), the first issued under its auspices. All military personnel allied to the Republic of Korea were eligible to receive the decoration for service from 27 June 1950 until 27 July 1954. Some nations' forces served longer (until 1955) and were eligible until the end of that period.

The medal consists of a 36mm-wide bronze disk, the obverse decorated with the United Nations emblem of the 'World-in-a-Wreath'. This emblem, first designed in 1945, represents the world projected in a circle seen from the North Pole, bordered by an olive wreath. The reverse has the legend "FOR SERVICE IN DEFENCE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS" in the appropriate language of the service country. The medal is hung from a straight bar suspension with a claw and a bar with the name "KOREA" in the same language as the reverse legend. The ribbon consists of 17 stripes of United Nations blue and white.

Unlike medals awarded by sovereign nations, which are awarded by the head of state, the UNKM was given to eligible participants on behalf of the United Nations commander-in-chief of military forces in Korea. This role had been established only on 7 July 1950 (as Resolution 84). The medal was therefore awarded by the six United States of America generals who served in that capacity during and immediately after the war (Douglas MacArthur, Matthew Ridgway, Mark Clark, John Hull, Maxwell Taylor and Lyman Lemnitzer).

RIBBON

The 17 stripes of the ribbon are divided into nine blue (known officially as United Nations Blue – Bluebird 67117) and eight white stripes, each 2mm wide.

SUSPENSION AND BAR

The medal hangs from a straight bar suspension by a claw attachment (the most common type of military decoration suspension). A bar containing the word "KOREA" extends between the arms of the suspension.

REVERSE

The reverse of the medal has the legend: "FOR SERVICE IN DEFENCE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS." The language of this legend differs for the countries involved – it has been issued in 11 different languages.

OBVERSE

The obverse displays the 'World-in-a-Wreath' emblem of the United Nations, adopted in 1945, showing the world in an azimuthal projection down from the North Pole to 60° south latitude.

BELOW Korean veteran Colonel Robin Charley wears his Korean War medal in 2014. The bronze disk of the UNKM makes it stand out from other service medals with silver disks

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Hall of Fame

KEY WAR LEADERS

These individuals shaped the conduct of the war on the Korean Peninsula and influenced the course of the Cold War

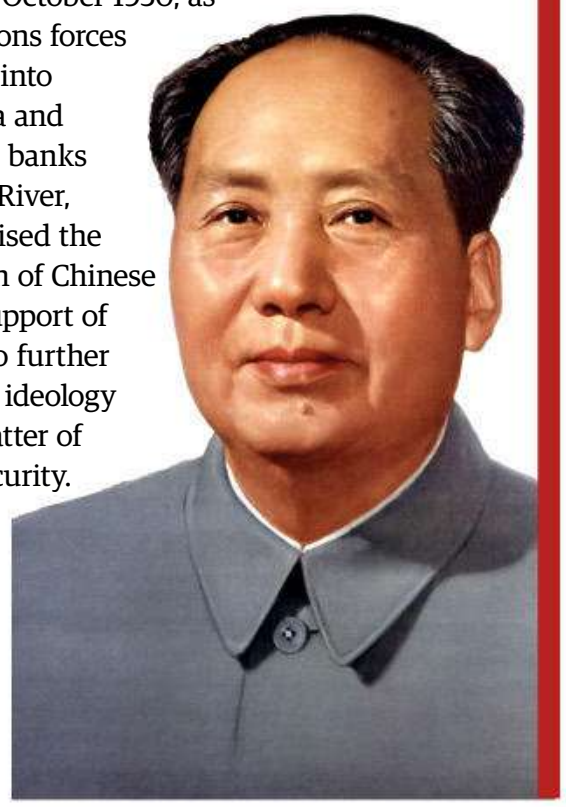
Eisenhower considered both nuclear and conventional war unwinnable, but faced armistice opposition from his own political party and Rhee.

Dwight D Eisenhower
USA, 1890-1969

Dwight D Eisenhower, the 34th President of the United States, took office in 1953, while the Korean War languished in stalemate. A 1915 graduate of the US Military Academy, Eisenhower was a hero of World War II who commanded Allied forces in Western Europe. Eisenhower made the containment of communism one of his top priorities, and after observing the military stalemate during a visit to Korea in late 1952, he increased pressure on communist China to conclude an armistice, even considering the use of nuclear weapons if the Chinese refused substantive negotiations. The armistice, still in place today, was concluded on 27 July 1953.

MAO TSE-TUNG
CHINA, 1893-1976

After seizing power following a protracted civil war with his nationalist opponents, Mao Tse-tung led communist China from 1949 until his death in 1976. With the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, Mao's regime was only a year old. In October 1950, as United Nations forces drove deep into North Korea and reached the banks of the Yalu River, Mao authorised the introduction of Chinese troops in support of the North to further communist ideology and as a matter of national security.



GEN. MATTHEW RIDGWAY
USA, 1895-1993

General Matthew Ridgway, a combat veteran of World War II, succeeded General Douglas MacArthur as commander of United Nations forces during the Korean War. Ridgway had previously led the US Eighth Army on the peninsula, taking command at a critical time, restoring the morale of the troops, halting a major Chinese offensive with a significant victory at the Battle of Chipyong-ni, and executing a series of limited counteroffensive actions. He replaced MacArthur in April 1952.

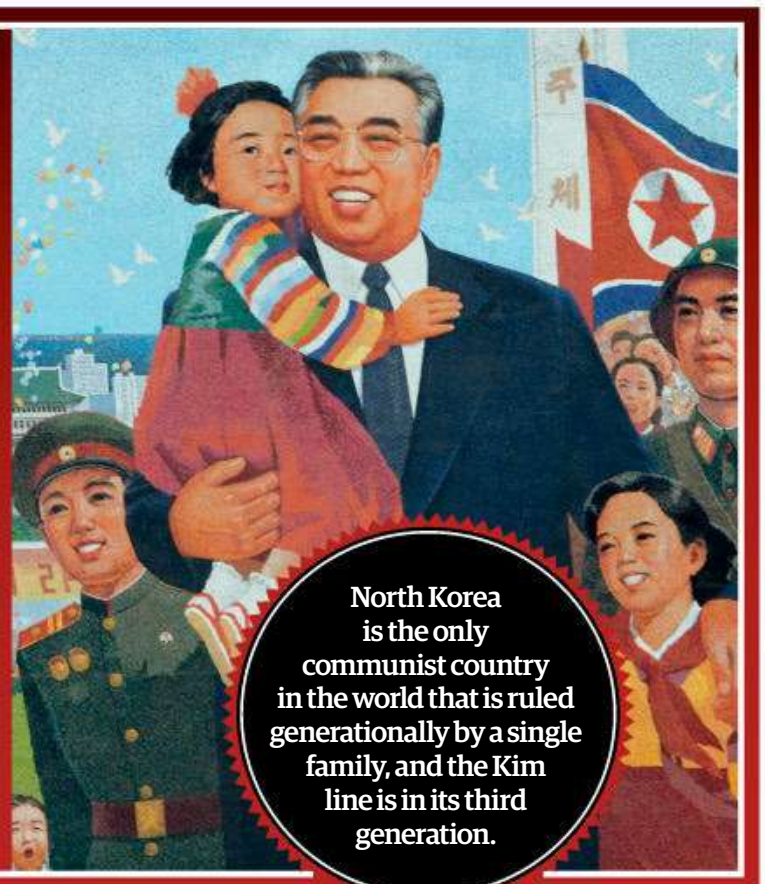
Syngman Rhee
South Korea, 1875-1965

Syngman Rhee was the leader of South Korea, serving as the country's first president from 1948 to 1960. Rhee had previously served as president of a provisional government in Korea, but was impeached in 1925. He was educated in the United States, and was fervently anti-Japanese during that country's mandate over the Korean Peninsula. Rhee lived in Washington, DC, and cooperated with the US government during World War II, returning to his country just weeks prior to his election as president of the partitioned South Korea. Rhee, an authoritarian leader and staunch anti-communist, was forced to resign in 1960.

After resigning the South Korean presidency in 1960, Syngman Rhee was flown to Honolulu, Hawaii, by the CIA, and later died there of a stroke.

Kim Il-sung
North Korea, 1912-94

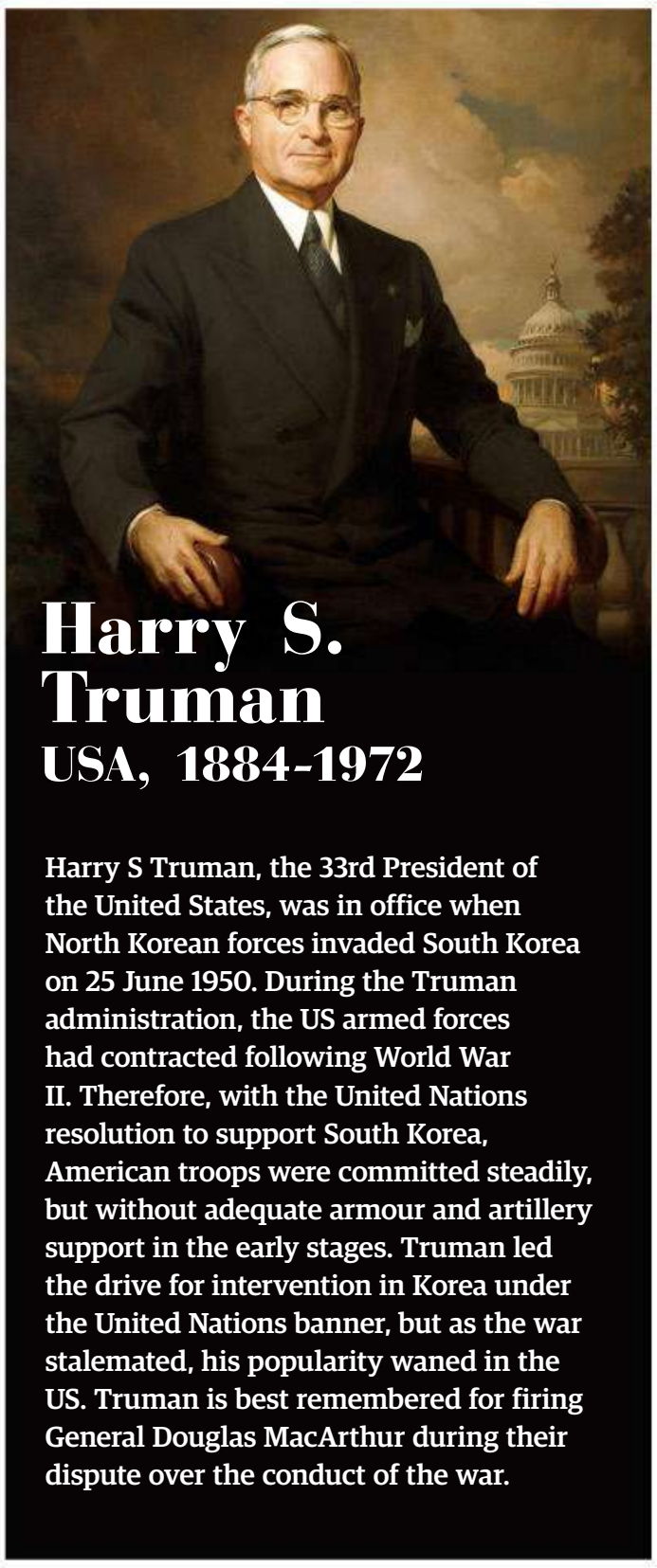
Kim Il-sung was the leader of communist North Korea from the country's early days until his death in 1994. Kim was handpicked by the Soviet Union to lead a communist government friendly to Soviet policy. He became a member of a Marxist organisation at the age of 17 and returned to his country in 1945, at the end of World War II, after 26 years in exile. Kim launched the invasion of South Korea after receiving assurances of support from the Soviets. He ruled North Korea with an iron fist for nearly a half century, and was succeeded by his son, Kim Jong-il.



North Korea is the only communist country in the world that is ruled generationally by a single family, and the Kim line is in its third generation.

JOSEF STALIN
SOVIET UNION, 1878-1953

Josef Stalin, successor to Vladimir Lenin, was leader of the Soviet Union from 1924 until his death in 1953. Stalin led the Soviet Union during World War II, and afterward expanded his country's sphere of influence to include Eastern Europe and most of the Marxist world. Stalin agreed to support the North Korean invasion of the South in 1950, but wished to avoid direct military conflict with the USA.



Harry S. Truman
USA, 1884-1972

Harry S Truman, the 33rd President of the United States, was in office when North Korean forces invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950. During the Truman administration, the US armed forces had contracted following World War II. Therefore, with the United Nations resolution to support South Korea, American troops were committed steadily, but without adequate armour and artillery support in the early stages. Truman led the drive for intervention in Korea under the United Nations banner, but as the war stalemated, his popularity waned in the US. Truman is best remembered for firing General Douglas MacArthur during their dispute over the conduct of the war.

GENERAL JAMES VAN FLEET
USA, 1892-1992

General James Van Fleet was a 1915 graduate of the US Military Academy and classmate of President Dwight Eisenhower. A veteran of both world wars, he was a key military advisor during the Greek Civil War, and succeeded General Matthew Ridgway as commander of the US Eighth Army in Korea in April 1951. Van Fleet commanded Eighth Army during bitter fighting and limited tactical offensive efforts as negotiations to end the fighting in Korea dragged on for months.

GENERAL WALTON WALKER
USA, 1889-1950

General Walton H Walker was the initial commander of the US Eighth Army during the Korean War. A veteran of both world wars, he was tasked with stemming the tide of invaders, and successfully defended the Pusan Perimeter with an undermanned force. He then led Eighth Army during the offensive, launched simultaneously with the X Corps landings at Inchon. He was killed in a traffic accident in December 1950, and replaced by General Matthew Ridgway.

Image source: wiki/ Army Historical Foundation

General Douglas MacArthur
USA, 1880-1964

General Douglas MacArthur was the initial commander of United Nations forces during the Korean War. A 1903 graduate of the US Military Academy and hero of World War II, MacArthur was senior US administrator during the post-war occupation of Japan. In September 1950, he authorised the successful amphibious landing at Inchon that altered the course of the Korean War, leading the subsequent UN advance across the 38th parallel into North Korea. MacArthur's aggressiveness threatened to widen the war, possibly involving communist China or the Soviet Union, and open conflict with President Harry Truman led to his removal from command in the spring of 1951.

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After his removal from command in Korea, General Douglas MacArthur addressed a joint session of Congress saying, "Old soldiers never die. They just fade away."

Q&A

WHY FIGHT IN KOREA?

Retired US Army officer and author Tom Hanson provides perspective on the Korean War

Why did war erupt on the Korean Peninsula in 1950?
Nobody was satisfied with the division of Korea after World War II – not the Americans, the Soviets, the Chinese, or Koreans themselves. The Japanese had colonised and exploited Korea ruthlessly for decades. There were Korean expatriates living in the United States, and Syngman Rhee was one of them. Expatriate Koreans also lived in China, and some sought shelter with Mao's Eighth Route Army during World War II, thinking Mao would lead the liberation of Korea. Kim Il-sung is a murky character, and he was anointed by the Soviets as their man in Korea. They gave him military assistance to field a modern army. The Koreans are a proud and patriotic people, South and North, and they would prefer today to have a unified country.

Was the Soviet Union directly involved in the Korean War?
The communist Korean People's Army (PKA) invaded the South with the overt approval of the Soviet Union. There were Soviet advisors with them, and they were present, but out of the front lines. They had not trained the North Koreans for independent operations. They trained them to craft the plan, disseminate the plan, and fight the plan with Soviet doctrine.

Were South Korea and the US taken by surprise?
There is a difference between tactical and strategic surprise. From a strategic perspective, everybody knew that Korea was a powder keg. Tactically, the US advisor program never trained the South Korean Army for large-scale offensive operations. The training was specifically to deal with the communist insurgency in the South. The US held back aircraft, long-range artillery, and tanks and created a light infantry army with counterinsurgency mission and doctrine.

At the time of the invasion, there was no American or South Korean armour in country, and the last US armed forces had left Korea in June 1949. Eighth Army in Japan was the only US force west of the international date line. The first US combat element was Task Force Smith, chosen because the 24th Division was at Kyushu, and its commander, General William F Dean, had been a senior US officer in South Korea. There was also a lot of hubris involved, believing that the Asians would see American soldiers and run away because they "think we're 10 feet tall."

How would you describe the initial response from the United States and United Nations and the stand at the Pusan Perimeter?
It is a tale of sending small force packages at a steady rate. The US didn't have ability to project a lot of force into Korea all at one time.

Pusan was a heroic effort, and I would call it desperate. General Walton Walker does not get the credit he deserves for

Tom Hanson is a retired US Army colonel and author of the book *Combat Ready? The Eighth US Army On The Eve Of The Korean War 1949-1950*. He is a professor of military history at the US Army's School of Advanced Military Studies, and former faculty member at the US Military Academy, George Mason University, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, and the US Army's Command & General Staff School.

Photo courtesy of: Tom Hanson

RIGHT Korean People'sArmy and Chinese People's Volunteers celebrate a victory over the US in 1953

managing that fight. He had to defend an extensive perimeter that was being probed at virtually every point by tough people who, by that time, had significant combat experience against the Americans. Walker was a veteran of World War I and World War II, and served under General George S Patton, Jr. He was fighting on a shoestring while holding the line. In addition, General Douglas MacArthur and his staff did not keep Walker in the loop as far as strategy was concerned. Walker did not realise his situation had become an economy of force mission while MacArthur contemplated the landings at Inchon.

What is your assessment of the successful execution of the landings at Inchon?

I think MacArthur was extraordinarily lucky, and Napoleon once said that luck was a principal requirement for successful commanders. MacArthur had lived in Asia since 1935, and had extensive service there. He understood that the North Koreans had shot their bolt with their offensive and were tied up at the Pusan Perimeter. An assault so far from Pusan was a calculated risk, but he knew that if he kicked the door open, the whole house would fall in on itself.

Subsequent to Inchon, how would you describe the fighting into North Korea and toward the Yalu River?

As soon as X Corps comes ashore at Inchon, the 1st Marine Division heads toward Seoul and the 7th Infantry Division fights down into Pusan as Walker fights out. When September 1950 comes, the North Koreans are at end of long lines of supply and communications. The Americans take advantage of interior lines, and the KPA melts away.

However, MacArthur's genius starts to fail as Walker fights to Seoul. MacArthur tells Walker to take Pyongyang. The entire Eighth Army is moving up the west coast. The X Corps is moving to link up with a South Korean column, and the two forces are separated by a mountain range. General Walker in the west and General Edward Almond in the east also hate each other.

How did President Harry Truman and General MacArthur clash?

Truman is hands off right now; in September he fires Secretary of Defence Louis Johnson and persuades George C Marshall to take the post. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are wary of MacArthur's plans, and go along with crossing the 38th parallel and defeating of North Korea – but with parameters not to go too close to the Yalu River or into Manchuria in a rapid advance that might trigger a response by the Soviet Union or China or both. MacArthur isn't worried about the Chinese until Chinese soldiers are on the battlefield in early November, but then he wants the military assets to convince the Chinese not to be involved.

After the disaster at the Chosin Reservoir, MacArthur wants local release authority for the use of nuclear weapons and the introduction of nationalist Chinese troops. Truman says, "Hell no!"

TOP President Truman presents a Distinguished Service Medal to General Douglas MacArthur

ABOVE US Marines advance having landed at Inchon

3x © Getty Images

What are your thoughts on the famous fight at the Chosin Reservoir?

It's a great story of heroism by soldiers who didn't choose to be where they were, a great story of soldiers overcoming obstacles. But it doesn't cover many officers in glory at all. Marines and army troops retreated slowly back to Hungnam and were evacuated. They were under pressure as they retreated south. The Chinese were learning to fight the Americans, and knew they could be beaten if they were overwhelmed, cut off, and demoralised.

What brought the Korean War to a negotiated armistice?

Actually, the United Nations forces lose control of Seoul and retreat back down to South Korea. General Matthew Ridgway later restores the offensive mindset and plans and executes a series of limited offensives to kick the PKA back to the 38th parallel. He did what he could, and effectively helped get communists to negotiating table.

What is your assessment of the current situation between North and South Korea?

The South Koreans are our allies, and their importance has only grown as Communist China has become a greater threat to international stability. If North Korea continues its missile testing and to make trouble, the Japanese will probably embark on their own nuclear weapons program, and that will get China's attention in big way. Taking care of the Korean problem will reduce tension. Critics argue a peace treaty would confer international legitimacy on Kim Jong-un's regime, but we can't continue with the current status. So there is no harm in going to the table and talking again.

MUSEUMS AND MEMORIALS

The Korean Peninsula contains some fascinating locations associated with the conflict between North and South Korea

1 THE DEMILITARISED ZONE

MILITARY DEMARCATION LINE AND DEMILITARISED ZONE AROUND THE 38TH PARALLEL BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH

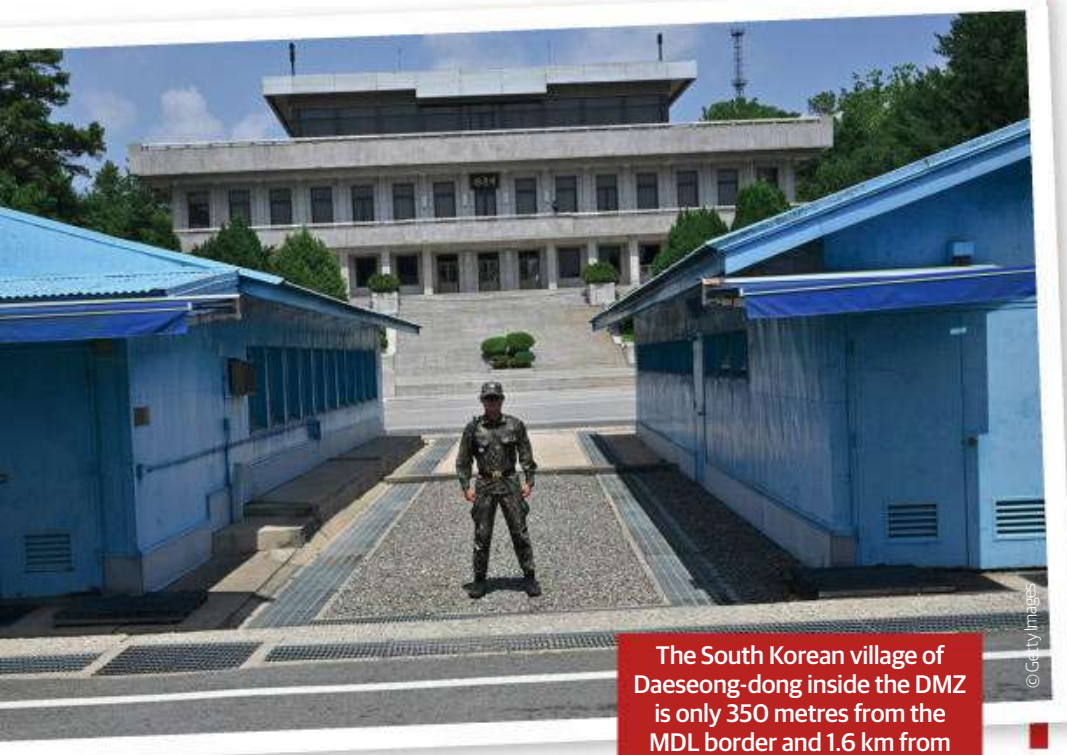
© Getty Images

At the armistice in July 1953, a Military Demarcation Line (MDL) between North and South Korea was agreed at the village of Panmunjom, where the negotiation pavilion still stands. 2 kilometres either side of the line were evacuated to become the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ). The DMZ is thus four kilometres wide and 248 kilometres long, dividing North and South Korea. Most of the territory in the DMZ was evacuated (such as the village of Panmunjom). Two villages within the DMZ remain – Daeseong-dong in the South and Kijong-dong in the North. It is alleged that Kijong-dong was built in the 1950s as a propaganda stunt.

The DMZ can be visited, although great caution needs to be observed and security is tight. Sights include Dorasan Station on the edge of the DMZ, Odusan Unification Observatory, the Third Infiltration Tunnel, and the Bridge of Freedom crossing the Imjin River at Imjingak. Tours to the DMZ (and even inside it to Daesong-dong and Panmunjom, for instance) can be arranged with notice.

This active border (the most heavily fortified border in the world) represents a visceral scar of the war, now 70 years in the past, but still a part of everyday life in modern Korea, and in the present worldwide political and military situation (technically the two sides are still at war).

Open all year (there is an 11pm curfew at Daesong-dong). Admission is free, extreme caution is advised.



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The South Korean village of Daeseong-dong inside the DMZ is only 350 metres from the MDL border and 1.6 km from Kijon-dong in North Korea

2 THE WAR MEMORIAL OF KOREA

SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The outdoor exhibition area of the museum showing equipment from various periods

© Getty Images

Completed in 1993 to display the military history of Korea, the War Memorial has six exhibition halls in its 20,000 square metres. Although the Memorial covers military history before and since the Korean War, that conflict is the mainstay of the exhibition.

Many of the displays of vehicles and equipment are from the war (including North Korean leader Kim Il-sung's limousine). The exhibitions are centred on the resistance to and liberation of the Republic of Korea by the invasion from the North by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The halls are very rich in all manner of displays – the heavy equipment is such that any museum would be proud of, but the museum also includes smaller displays, such as the flag of the Korean students studying in Japan when the war broke out who then landed at Inchon and fought, or General MacArthur's corn cob pipe.

Unsurprisingly, there is a focus on the ROK forces during the war, and the role of the UN is downplayed while the intervention of the PRC is emphasised.

Open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-6pm, closed every Monday. Admission is free.

Statue of a Chinese soldier fighting with a North Korean soldier. In South Korea, the two halves of the country are depicted as separated brothers

© Alamy

3 KOREAN WAR MUSEUM
DANDONG, CHINA

The Korean War Museum, which also translates as the Memorial Hall of the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea, is in Dandong, Liaoning, China. It is the only museum in China dedicated to the Korean War, and is located in Dandong (formerly Andong), the eastern Chinese city on the border with North Korea across the Yalu River. Andong was the site of the command post of the Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) during the war, a location preserved in the museum that covers 182,000 square metres.

Perhaps more accessible than the museums in North Korea, it offers a remarkable circumstance in modern conflict museums in that it presents the opposite side's perspective, even a balanced one to the sites in North and South Korea.

The museum boasts 20,000 items to show the victory in 1953 over what China saw as US aggression, as well as the development of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). The museum has many pieces of equipment, and includes a 132-metre long panoramic painting of the battle of Ch'ongch'on River (November/December 1950), a victory for the Chinese. It also has a 53-metre tall tower to commemorate the 1953 armistice. A museum existed on the site since 1958 but the present, much-enlarged, museum was opened in July 1993 on the 40th anniversary of the Panmunjom Armistice. It closed for renovations in 2014 and reopened in late 2020. It includes a Martyr's Wall, which bears the names of 183,108 Chinese soldiers who died in the war.

Open Tuesday-Sunday 9am-4:30pm, closed every Monday. Admission is free

4 VICTORIOUS WAR MUSEUM
PYONGYANG

Also known as the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum, this site in North Korea presents the North Korean perspective of the war. If a visit to North Korea can be arranged, the museum presents another, remarkable, 'other-side' perspective of the war, one skewed heavily against the USA.

The current museum was renovated in 2013, opening on the 60th anniversary of the end of the war, and sports large displays, including a massive 360° diorama of the Battle of Taejon (14-21 July 1950). Originally the museum opened in August 1953, only a month after the armistice. The museum then moved to its current site in 1963. Displays of North Korean equipment are dominant, although there are captured American and British examples, such as the USS Pueblo.

The main building and entrance of the Victorious War Museum is built to impress

© Alamy

Unlike the Korean War Museum in Dandong, China, the Victorious War Museum ignores the contribution of the PRC completely. Some aspects of the displays are highly contentious (such as the sinking of the USS Baltimore in July 1950), if not fictionalised, so keep that in mind should you choose to explore.

Open 365 Days. Admission is free.

5 UNITED NATIONS MEMORIAL CEMETERY IN KOREA
BUSAN, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Korea is the only UN-designated cemetery in the world, honouring the UN soldiers who fell fighting in defence of the Republic of Korea. As well as hosting the graves of the fallen from 11 countries, it honours the 40,896 members of the UN forces from 17 countries who fell during the war.

A further five UN countries contributed troops, but suffered no war dead. Although a cemetery of fallen UN troops was established in Korea in 1951, the cemetery in Busan was established in 1955. 11,000 dead were interred originally, but most have been repatriated. The cemetery has 2,314 graves of soldiers from Australia, Canada, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Turkey, the UK and the USA, as well as Korean casualties. The site also has several memorials to MIA soldiers.

The site includes a Memorial Service Hall, Memorabilia Hall, Wall of Remembrance, and the UN Forces Monument. The Memorial Service Hall includes a documentary on the war, and the Memorabilia Halls contain photographs and artefacts, including the original UN flag carried by the troops. The entire cemetery is a sombre reminder of the price UN troops and others were willing to pay.

Open 365 days, Oct-Apr 9am-5pm, May-Sep 9am-6pm; Admission is free

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A section of graves looking towards the Commonwealth Memorial

The Wall of Remembrance names the casualties from the 17 UN countries in the war

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CRUEL TO BE KIND

KING JOHN

Was this maligned monarch the monster of mythology or a misunderstood reformer?

Written by Nick Barratt

There have been 40 monarchs since William, Duke of Normandy, seized the English throne at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. King John, who reigned from 1199-1216, must be one of the worst – and that's taking into account some pretty stiff competition among his successors. Richard III murdered his nephews, Charles I sparked a full-scale civil war by raising illegal taxation, Henry VI lost all his continental lands, George III did likewise with the American colonies (both of whom suffered from bouts of insanity), George IV and Charles II were serial womanisers, and Richard II's authoritarian regime triggered revolt and rebellion. Remarkably, John managed to cram all of the above, and more, into his 17 eventful years. No wonder the medieval chronicler Matthew Paris wrote: "Foul as it is, Hell is made fouler by the presence of John."

"WITH THE PASSING OF TIME, IT'S VERY EASY TO WRITE SIMPLISTIC CARICATURES OF LONG-DEAD HISTORICAL FIGURES SUCH AS JOHN"

With the passing of time, it's very easy to write simplistic caricatures of long-dead historical figures such as John, portraying them as 'good' or 'bad' according to our own biases and standards. Nothing is ever that simple. As with most people, John was a complex personality, the product not only of his dysfunctional, over-powering Angevin family but also the bellicose era into which he was born at Beaumont Palace, Oxfordshire, on Christmas Eve 1166. Most 13th century writers uniformly condemned John as a man, as well as a

illustrations by: Joe Cummings All images: © Alamy

JOHN'S EDUCATION AND INFLUENCES

How the king was shaped by his upbringing

John's parents separated shortly after his birth when Eleanor returned to her native Aquitaine in the south of France, taking her favourite son, Richard, with her. Henry II lived openly with his mistress, Rosamund de Clifford, a few years afterwards. John was left in the care of a wet nurse, before being sent with his sister Joan to Fontevraud Abbey in his father's homeland of Anjou. They were educated by the monks, although John was assigned a tutor to help him understand the art of managing a household containing servants and military companions, something he experienced first-hand when he spent time in the retinue of his older brother Henry. John was clearly intelligent with a thirst for knowledge – in later life he was notable among his contemporaries for travelling with a personal library – and his flair for government and administration was kindled under the tutelage of Ranulf de Glanvill, one of the leading administrators of the age who helped deliver Henry II's legal reforms in England. John's love of hunting was also developed during these formative years, something he pursued endlessly during his time in England after 1204.

ABOVE John was the youngest of Henry II's eight legitimate children

RIGHT John was also known as John 'Lackland' since being the youngest son would normally mean he would inherit nothing from his father

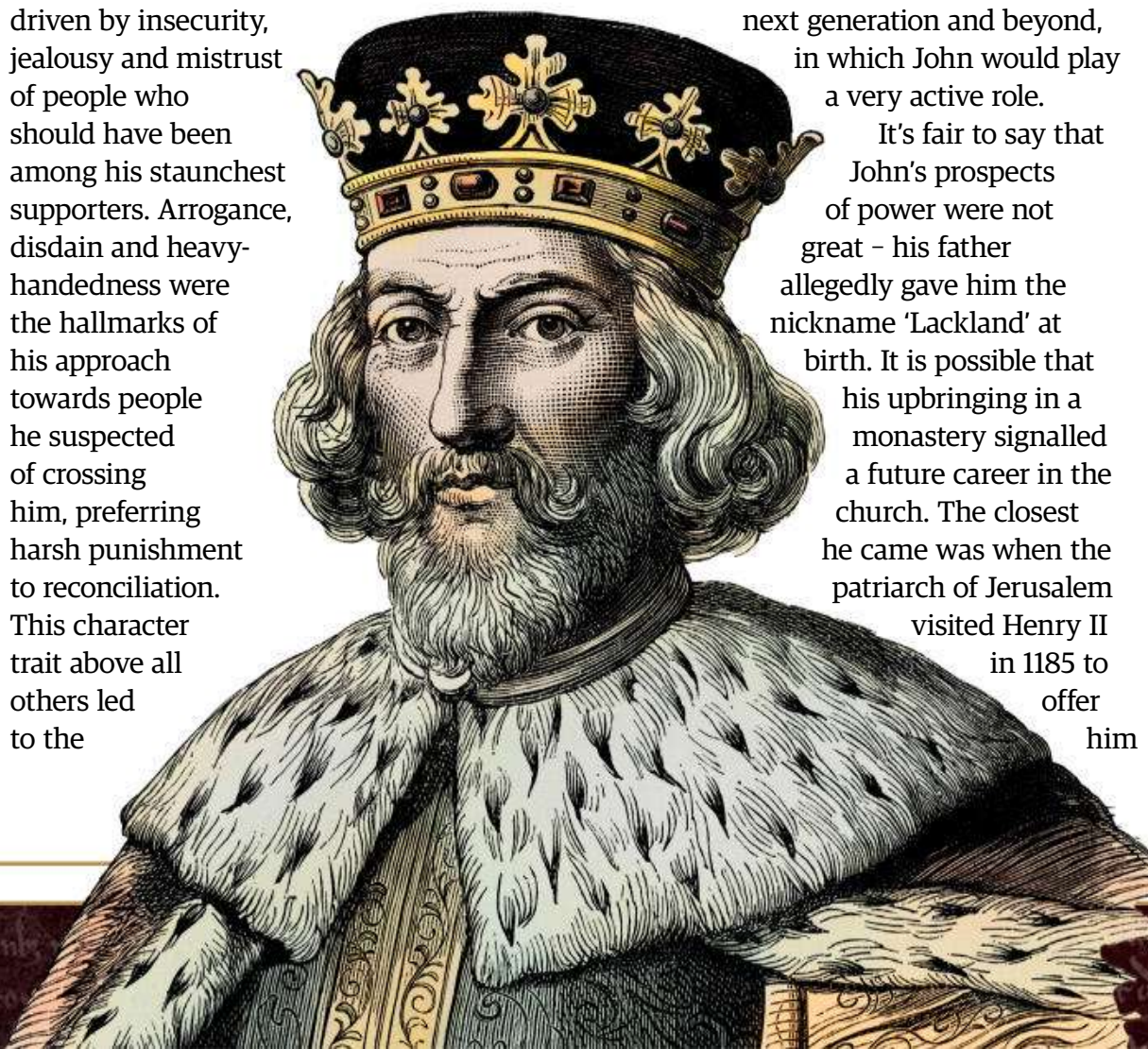
king. Chief among them was Paris, who created the enduring image that John was: "A tyrant not a king, a destroyer instead of a governor, crushing his own people and favouring aliens, a lion to his subjects but a lamb to foreigners and rebels... He was an insatiable extorter of money; he invaded and destroyed his subjects' property... He himself was envious of many of his barons and kinsfolk and seduced their more attractive daughters and sisters."

There is plenty of evidence to give a slightly more balanced and rounded view of John as a person, someone who could be witty and charming, generous and considerate, shrewd and tactical, and at times brave and daring. Equally though, John could become consumed by rage in the blink of an eye, gnawing his fingers and teetering on the brink of madness. He would pursue a vendetta with a malicious determination driven by insecurity, jealousy and mistrust of people who should have been among his staunchest supporters. Arrogance, disdain and heavy-handedness were the hallmarks of his approach towards people he suspected of crossing him, preferring harsh punishment to reconciliation. This character trait above all others led to the catastrophic errors of judgment that saw his reign unravel.

A DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

John was the youngest of eight legitimate children born to the power couple of the age. His father was King Henry II of England, who had inherited the duchy of Anjou from his father, as well as England and Normandy from his mother. To these already extensive lands Henry II added the duchy of Aquitaine when he married the recently divorced queen of France, Eleanor. The lands controlled by the couple stretched from the Pyrenees in the south to the border of Scotland in the north, as well as an influence over various satellite provinces, and made them more powerful than their overlord, the king of France. An enmity was thus born between the Angevin and Capetian families that would extend to the next generation and beyond, in which John would play a very active role.

It's fair to say that John's prospects of power were not great – his father allegedly gave him the nickname 'Lackland' at birth. It is possible that his upbringing in a monastery signalled a future career in the church. The closest he came was when the patriarch of Jerusalem visited Henry II in 1185 to offer him



"John could be witty and charming, generous and considerate"

the crown of the kingdom, one of the Christian settlements in the Holy Land that was under severe threat from Muslim forces. John went down on bended knee and begged his father to be given the opportunity, but Henry refused as he did not feel that John had the experience to take up such a challenging role. This perception of John's inadequacies was a familiar theme throughout his life, and probably helped to foster a sense of self-doubt at crucial moments during his reign.

Most of the family's strife came over the division of their extensive territories. Henry II's eldest son William died aged three, leaving Henry the young king as the heir to England, Normandy and Anjou – in fact, he was so named because he was crowned as king of England during his father's lifetime. Richard was earmarked to succeed his mother in Aquitaine, while Geoffrey – the third eldest brother – married the heiress to Brittany, bringing the important territory into the Angevin orbit as well. John's sisters were used as diplomatic pawns, entering into marriage alliances to win the support of other rulers around Europe. All John could expect was the county of Mortain in Normandy, the control of a few castles in Anjou and the lordship of Ireland on the far edge of the Angevin lands.

Simmering tensions between father and sons erupted into open war in 1173, fuelled by the Capetian king of France Louis VII. While Henry II defeated the coalition of forces ranged against him and was reconciled with his children, the underlying issues never disappeared. The young Henry died in 1183 having taken up arms against his brother Richard, whereupon Henry II reassigned England, Normandy and Anjou to Richard and gave Aquitaine to John. Richard refused to hand over the duchy, primarily on the grounds that John had no military or administrative experience – an observation that John unfortunately proved to be accurate when he went to Ireland in 1185 and managed to alienate pretty much everyone over the course of a few short months. Geoffrey's death in 1186 – also

ABOVE Richard I named his brother John as his heir and died in 1199, leaving England in his hands

RIGHT Richard I pardoned his brother even though he had plotted against him with the aid of Philip II of France

plotting against his father with the new king of France, Philip Augustus – further raised the power stakes. Philip exploited the difficulties between Henry II and his remaining sons, convincing Richard in 1187 that Henry was planning to disinherit him in favour of John. They waged war against the aging king, eventually hounding him into a humiliating peace in 1189 while he was holed up at Chinon Castle, injured and gravely ill. Henry asked to see the list of rebels who had turned against him, at the top of the list was John's name – he had switched sides at the last minute when he saw that his father's position was hopeless. The betrayal of his youngest son was the final straw. Henry II turned his face to the world, stating: "Now let everything go as it will; I care no longer for myself or anything else in the world." He died the next day.

A thirst for power

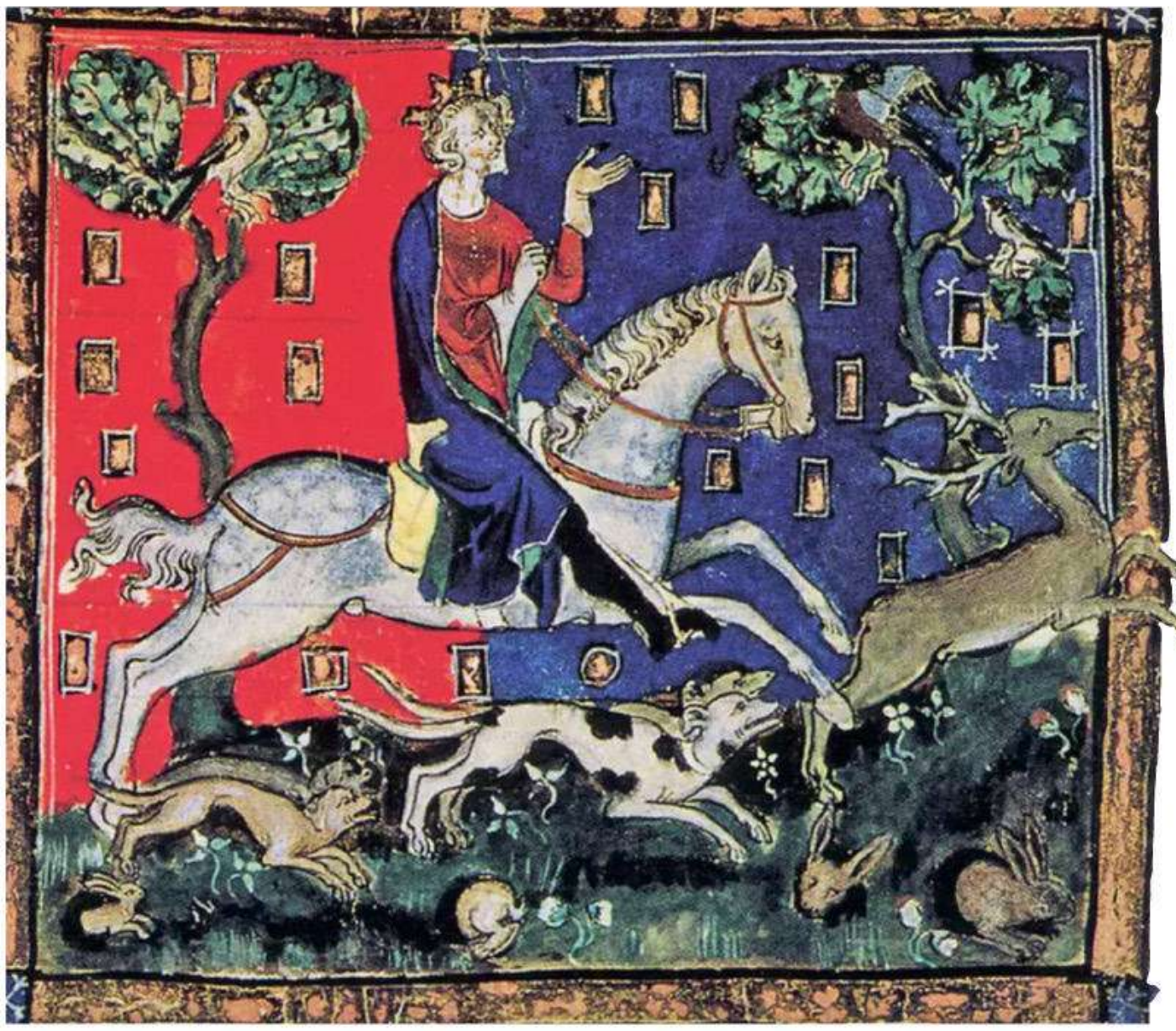
John's treacherous role in the death of his father did not endear him to Richard, who had already turned his attention to his imminent crusade to the Holy Land. John's opportunistic and cynical thirst for power meant Richard did not name him as regent, despite being compelled to grant his brother extensive property throughout England worth £4,000, as well as a lucrative marriage to the wealthy heiress Isabella of Gloucester, which made John the second-richest individual in the country after the king. Many questioned Richard's judgment, muttering "both in public and in private, that if John's innate characteristics were not suppressed, his lust for power might lead him to drive his brother from the throne". As a precaution against this risk, Richard gave control of government in each of his realms to trusted officials and refused to clarify who his successor would be should he fail to return home.

It may well have been sensible to keep John away from the reins of power, but such a visible snub only fuelled his sense of injustice and provoked the behaviour Richard was trying to prevent. John first tried to assert his authority as the leading magnate in England but failed to gather any meaningful support and was quickly thwarted by Richard's supporters. Then, when news reached him that Richard had been captured and imprisoned on his way back from the Holy Land in December 1192, John sided with Philip Augustus in an attempt to oust Richard from his continental possessions, even handing over parts of the strategically important Norman Vexin to curry favour with Philip on the basis that ruling something was better than nothing.

ABOVE A woodcut rendition of a silver penny minted in Ireland during King John's reign

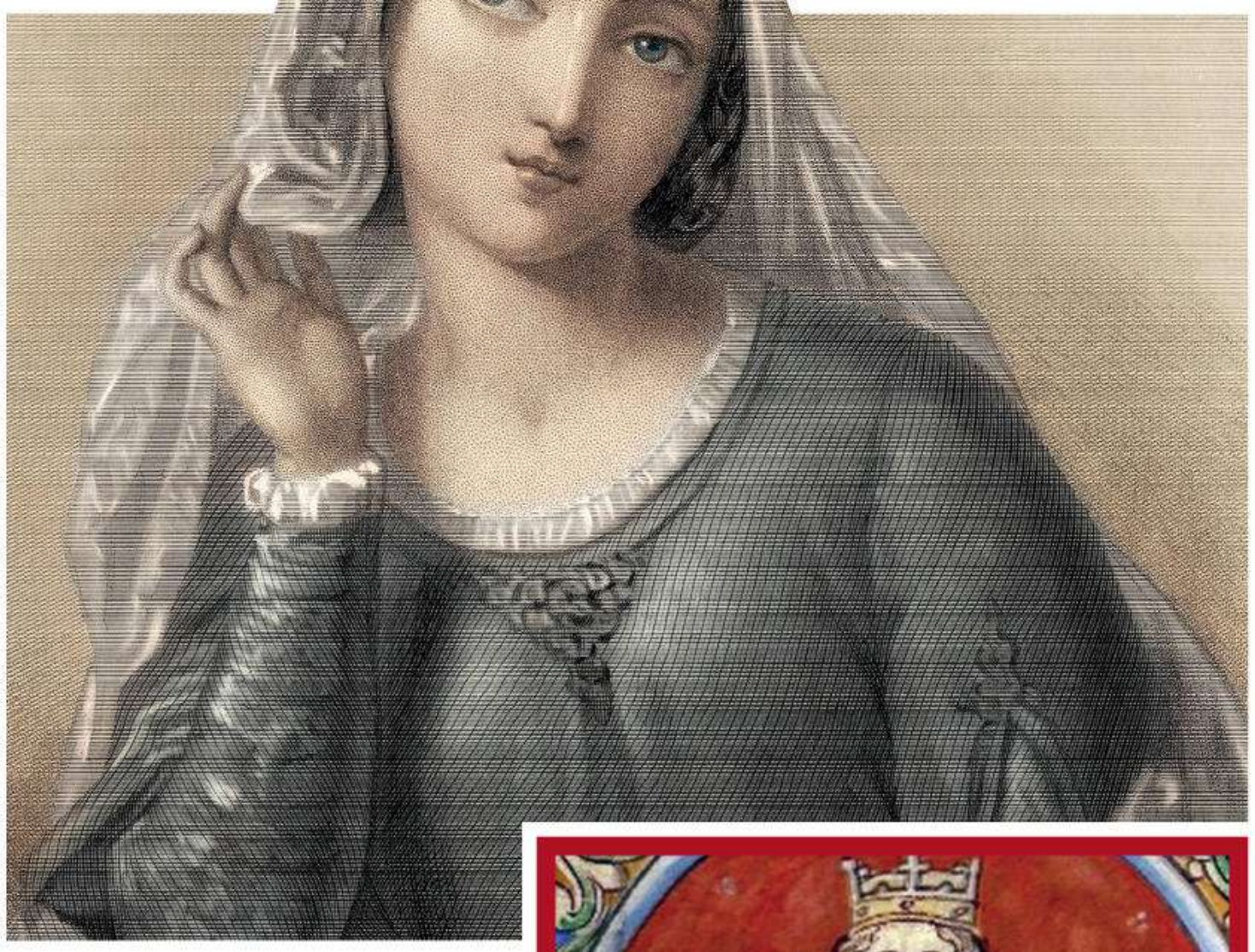
Richard's views about his brother's character are particularly telling. When informed that John had sided with Philip, he noted: "My brother John is not the man to win lands by force if there is anyone to oppose him." (An early reference to another of his nicknames – Softsword.) When they were eventually reconciled in 1194, Richard still saw him as an inferior, stating: "Don't be afraid, John, you are a child. You have got into bad company and it is those who have led you astray who will be punished." No-one took John seriously.

BELOW A 14th century image of King John out hunting



> "John's treacherous role in the death of his father did not endear him to Richard"

Herein lies the narrative of John's life. His attempts to demonstrate his suitability for authority generated feelings of distrust and distaste among his contemporaries, who grew to despise him and treat him with contempt. Yet it was precisely because he was the youngest son, and not given any opportunity to test his leadership with a province in a way that Richard or Geoffrey had been, that he was particularly ill equipped when the chance arose, as it did in 1199 when Richard died suddenly while on campaign. On hearing that John had been named as Richard's heir, two of the late king's most influential officials, William Marshal and Hubert Walter, debated possible alternatives. Walter's initial reaction was to support the claim of Richard's nephew, Arthur of



Brittany. Marshal replied: "To my mind, that would be bad. Arthur is counselled by traitors; he is haughty and proud, and if we put him over us he will only do us harm for he does not love the people of this land. Consider rather John: he seems to me the nearest heir to the land which belonged to his father and brother." Walter remained concerned: "Marshal, is this really your desire?" "Yes my lord, for it is just. Undoubtedly, a son has a better claim to his father's land than a grandson; it is right that he should have it." Walter sighed. "So be it then, but mark my words Marshal, you will never regret anything in your life as much as this."

John in Europe

Overnight, John went from 'Lackland' to one of the most powerful men in western Europe, defying the odds to possess all Richard's extensive lands, despite the claims of his young nephew Arthur. The early verdict on his reign was positive, particularly when he agreed to the Treaty of Le Goulet with Philip Augustus in 1200, ending years of costly warfare between the Angevins and Capetians in Normandy. Contemporary chroniclers praised John in comparison with his brother's bellicose nature, particularly the way Richard had shipped English silver across the Channel to spend on Norman castles and mercenaries, conveniently forgetting that

TOP John had his first marriage to Isabella, Countess of Gloucester, annulled not long after becoming king and married Isabella, Countess of Angoulême, in 1200

ABOVE King John shown holding a model of Beaulieu Abbey, which he commissioned. The abbey was later destroyed by Henry VIII

RIGHT King John's castle in County Limerick, Republic of Ireland, seen from across the River Shannon

KING JOHN IN IRELAND

His first taste of power did not bode well

As the youngest legitimate son of Henry II, John was unlikely to inherit much from his father, but it seems that Ireland may have been earmarked for him and could have been a path to leadership if he hadn't messed it up so thoroughly. King Henry named his son viceroy of the isle in 1177, perhaps with an eye to greater things in the future.

John arrived in Ireland in 1185 with 300 knights, cavalry, archers and around 60 ships, clearly set up to impose control. However, he quickly alienated the local lords by handing out land to his friends and generally fostering a belligerent atmosphere. He then wasted the money that was collected from the people. Eventually the other lords rose up against him and John was handed a humiliating defeat after only eight months in Ireland.

He returned to Ireland in 1210, now king of England, this time to bring to heel rebellious lords, which he achieved with relative ease considering his disastrous first stay in the country. With a choice between making his own son king of Ireland or bringing it more fully under English control, John chose to impose English laws, centralising control in a similar situation to the one that would upset the English barons in the years to come.

MAGNA CARTA

The abridged version

Don't have time to read all 63 clauses of the Magna Carta? Here are the main points

"The guardian of the land of an heir who is under age shall take from it only reasonable revenues, customary dues, and feudal services. He shall do this without destruction or damage to men or property"

"No one can make money from other people's property"

"Property disputes should be settled in court"

"Inquests of novel disseisin, mort d'ancestor, and darrein presentment shall be taken only in their proper county court"

"Everyone has the right to a fair trial"

"No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land"

"All merchants may enter or leave England unharmed and without fear, and may stay or travel within it, by land or water, for purposes of trade, free from all illegal exactions, in accordance with ancient and lawful customs"

"To no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse or delay, right or justice"

"Merchants can travel and trade freely"

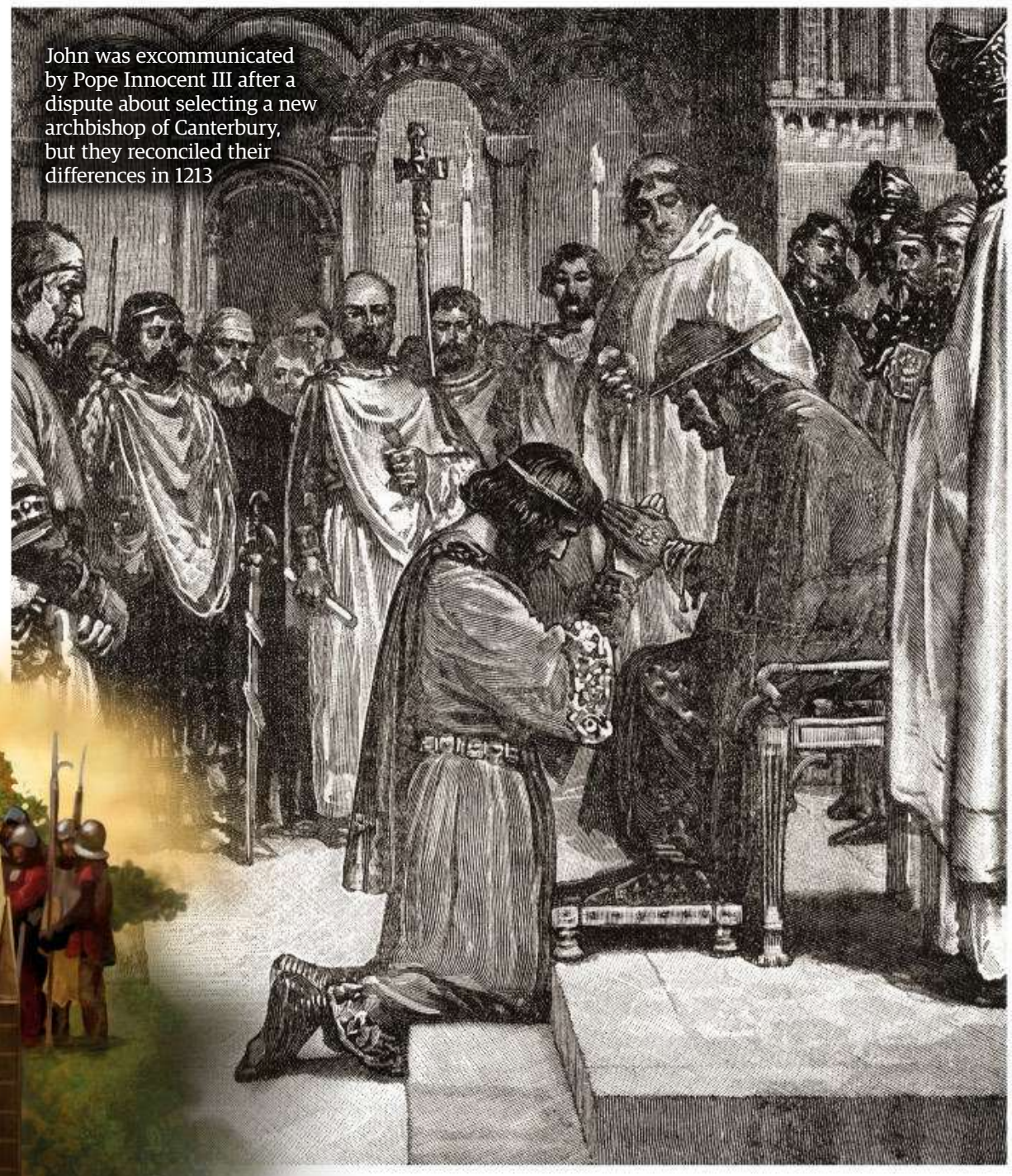
"NO ONE IS ABOVE THE LAW"

it was John's recklessness that gifted key lands to Philip and necessitated Richard's campaigns of reconquest.

However, the Treaty of Le Goulet was a huge tactical mistake because it clarified the relationship between John and Philip, something his father and brother had studiously left ambiguous. Henceforth, John was a vassal of the king of France and subject to his rules and regulations, which meant his subjects in his continental lands could appeal over his head – giving Philip an excuse to meddle in Angevin affairs. He did not have to wait very long.

John's political naivety was due in part to his lack of knowledge of his new realms, particularly in Aquitaine. Having cast aside his own wife, his first mistake was to marry the heiress to the county of Angouleme, Isabella, in August 1200 (she was no more than 12 years old and possibly as young as nine). While the union consolidated John's power base in the region, it came at a huge political cost because Isabella was already betrothed to Hugh de Lusignan, a powerful local lord. John's response to de Lusignan's protestations was to punish him, confiscating his territories, leading de Lusignan to lodge a formal complaint with Philip about John's actions. Philip then summoned John to appear at his court in Paris to answer the charges, and while the occasion ended in expressions of mutual friendship, John could not help himself and on his return to his lands proceeded to prosecute the de Lusignans for treason. A second complaint was sent to Philip, but this time John decided to engage in a battle of wills with his overlord that rumbled on throughout 1201 and into 1202. After repeated summons were ignored, Philip lost patience. He exercised his prerogative as overlord and decreed John should forfeit his titles in Normandy, Anjou and large parts of Aquitaine, replacing him with his nephew Arthur of Brittany in the latter two territories. This was the cue for widespread revolt against John.

This wholly avoidable situation was entirely down to John's miscalculation,

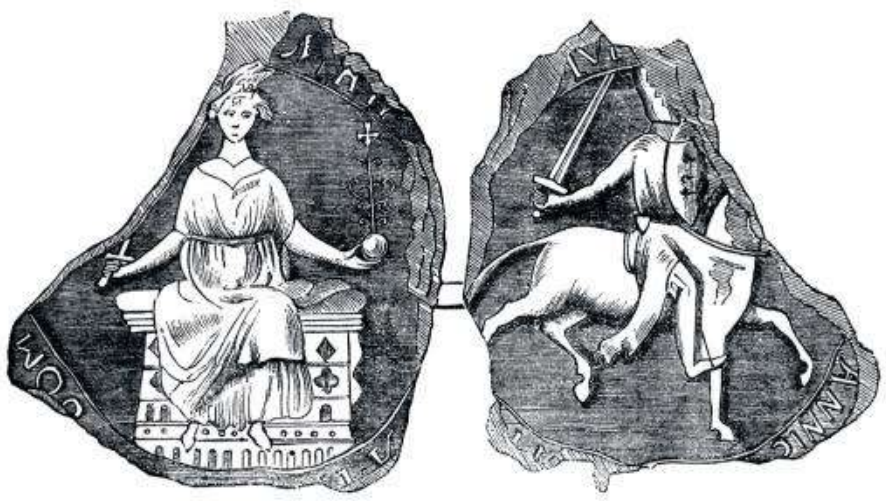


John was excommunicated by Pope Innocent III after a dispute about selecting a new archbishop of Canterbury, but they reconciled their differences in 1213

both of his own ability to face down Philip and the loyalty of his subjects, who had grown tired of John's policy of replacing Richard's officials with his own mercenaries, who had little interest in fair governance. War erupted on several fronts in 1202, but contrary to all expectations John won a stunning victory at Mirabeau when he captured virtually all of his enemies in one go, including his nephew. John's capability to develop bold and daring military strategies is perhaps underestimated, as demonstrated by his plan later in the war to relieve the siege of the key Norman defence, Château Gaillard, on the River Seine; this coordinated land and amphibious assault, which depended entirely on timing, was foiled when the river's current was misjudged. From 1210 he conducted successful campaigns against the Welsh, Scots and Irish, and devised a grand scheme to recapture his continental possessions in 1214 across multiple fronts, the medieval equivalent of total war. John did not lack ambition but was unable to match it with a similar level of ability.

This is perhaps best demonstrated by the way John snatched defeat from the jaws of victory after Mirabeau. He alienated key supporters and showed too much leniency to his enemies, but the most damaging act was the murder of Arthur, who was imprisoned at Rouen. On 3 April 1203 John was staying at the castle and became drunk; one of his dark rages had fallen upon him, the sort of anger where no one could reason with him. Accompanied by some of his closest followers, including William de Briouze, John ordered his prisoner to be brought to the top of the castle tower. "Possessed by the devil, he slew him with his own hand, and tying a heavy stone to the body, cast it into the Seine," stated one source.

Even though the full story only emerged in 1207, rumours of Arthur's death swirled around. Philip used them to his advantage and resumed the war, focusing on the chain of defences around Normandy. This time John's nerve deserted him. After the failure to relieve Chateau Gaillard, he left for England in December 1203 promising to return with reinforcements, but instead seems to have suffered a nervous breakdown. He spent days in bed with his wife, refusing to accept that his continental lands were about to fall to Philip. According to Roger of Wendover, his response to reminders about the danger remained: "Let be, let be, whatever he now takes I will one day recover." Chateau Gaillard held out until spring 1204, but when the half-starved garrison realised no help was coming, they surrendered.



"JOHN'S CAPABILITY TO DEVELOP BOLD AND DARING MILITARY STRATEGY IS PERHAPS UNDERESTIMATED"

John in England

John spent the next ten years bottled up in England, exploring every opportunity to extract money from his subjects and demonstrating his administrative flair and imagination. Vast sums were raised from new forms of taxation, paving the way for modern customs duties and income tax. The feudal relationship between king and leading subjects was exploited on an industrial scale, with bidding wars for the right to marry wealthy heiresses and exorbitant payments to inherit land. Most insidiously, John levied arbitrary penalties "for the good will of the king" on barons who he suspected of disloyalty, not necessarily to generate revenue but to create the threat of calling in the debt should they step out of line. Ruling by fear was not a tactic designed to win hearts and

TOP An illustration of the fragments of the great seal used by King John to ratify the Magna Carta

LEFT King John appears to have felt he was forced into approving the Magna Carta and backed down from its commitments

BELOW The Magna Carta was a watershed moment in the evolution of legal principles

minds, and John's reputation was sullied further by accusations of seducing the wives and daughters of his nobles, though much of the evidence seems to relate to his first marriage.

During this period John also managed to alienate Pope Innocent III, who placed the entire country under interdict in 1207 (meaning no religious ceremonies could take place) for six years when John refused to accept his candidate for the vacant archbishopric of Canterbury. John's piety was questioned by contemporary chroniclers, who cited many examples of his irreligious attitude. It should be no surprise that John's response to the interdict was to seize all church property, a useful windfall towards his campaign funds. The dispute was finally resolved in 1213, when John not only bowed to Innocent's demands but handed England over to him as a papal fief. Further scorn was poured on John for this perceived humiliation, but once again this move can be seen as a tactical masterstroke in his plans to regain his lost lands. With

> "The complete unravelling of John's grip on power was rapid"

the pope as his overlord, John now had a powerful ally against Philip.

John's decade in England stoked up huge political discontent, with many of the leading barons in the north refusing to follow him to the continent in 1214, claiming their duty of allegiance extended only to England's borders. John pressed on regardless. He had spent his time, and vast sums of money, assembling a grand coalition of Philip's enemies. The plan was to lead armies from both the south of France, where John still had some support and held Angouleme via his wife, and the north. While John made some progress, he was once again let down by the loyalty of the local lords, who refused to leave Aquitaine to join the fight. All his hopes rested upon his allies in the north, who engaged Philip in one of the most important battles in European history at Bouvines on 27 July 1214. It was initially a close affair, but ultimately Philip triumphed. John's hopes lay in tatters, and he returned to England to face the consequences of his rapacious activities.

MAIN IMAGE King John sought the support of the pope in his decision to repudiate the Magna Carta

ABOVE-LEFT The rebel barons found support from the French Prince Louis in the First Barons' War and fought the English fleet at the Battle of Sandwich

LEFT King John died from dysentery as the First Barons' War raged, after which the rebellion was gradually suppressed until it collapsed

The unravelling of John's grip on power was rapid. Emboldened by his failure abroad the leading rebels – many of whom had personal grievances against him – set out a plan to limit his powers and redefine their relationship with the crown, imposing upper limits on the amount that could be extracted from them in future. These demands were eventually hammered out into a charter, which was endorsed by the king at Runnymede in 1215 – a document we now know as Magna Carta. Even under the most severe pressure, John tried to turn the tables on his opponents, insisting that they too should be subject to similar constraints in the way they managed their estates. Ultimately, John appealed to his new overlord and Pope Innocent III annulled the charter, leading to civil war. The rebels invited Philip's son Louis to lead them, offering him the throne. The war dragged on into 1216 and was only ended by John's ignominious death from dysentery at the height of a thunderstorm while staying at Newark Castle in Nottinghamshire. One particularly colourful account of his death stated that John was "personally summoned to hell by the Devil."

The First Brexit

So why should we care about the folly and mistakes of a flawed man who died over eight centuries ago? John's reign marks a pivotal moment in both European and British history. The loss of Normandy has recently been called the "first Brexit," forcing the king of England to concentrate on the governance of the realm rather than continental affairs, and generating centuries of enmity with France. This forced him to redefine the relationship between England and the other nations in the British Isles. Furthermore, expectations of good government and the rule of law took root under his successor Henry III thanks to Magna Carta, still seen as a symbol of liberty and freedom around the world today. True, this was an inadvertent by-product of the shambolic end to his reign, but it needed someone like John to create the political circumstance for those sentiments to be expressed. We should reflect on the fact that out of chaos, order sometimes emerges.

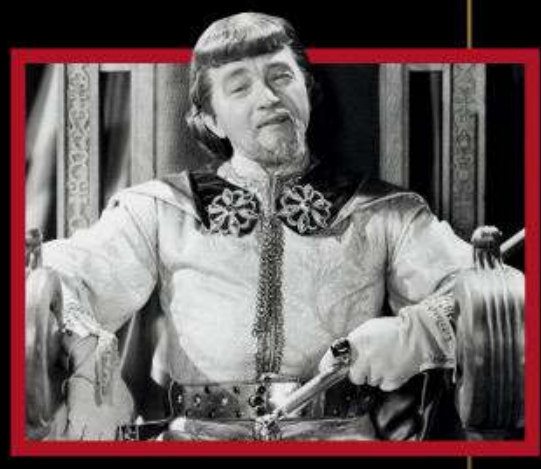
THE RESTLESS KINGS: Henry II, His Sons and the Wars for the Plantagenet Crown by Nick Barratt is available now from Faber & Faber

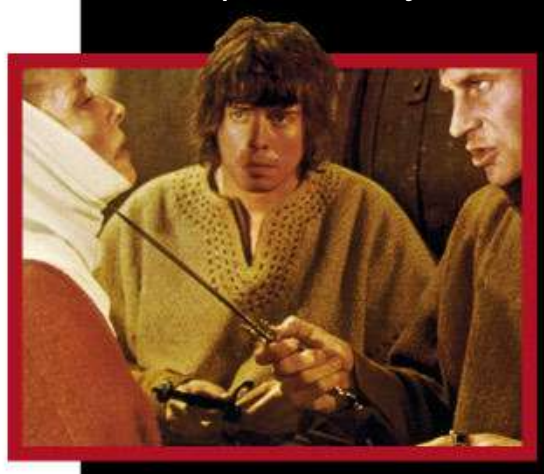
THE CLASSIC VILLAIN

King John has been portrayed many times on the silver screen

The Adventures of Robin Hood *(1938)*

This version of the classic English legend, starring Errol Flynn as Robin Hood, was a defining moment in cinematic history. Prince John is played by Claude Rains and is the main antagonist of the movie – the future king is portrayed as sinister, intelligent and full of contempt for his many enemies.





The Lion in Winter *(1968)*

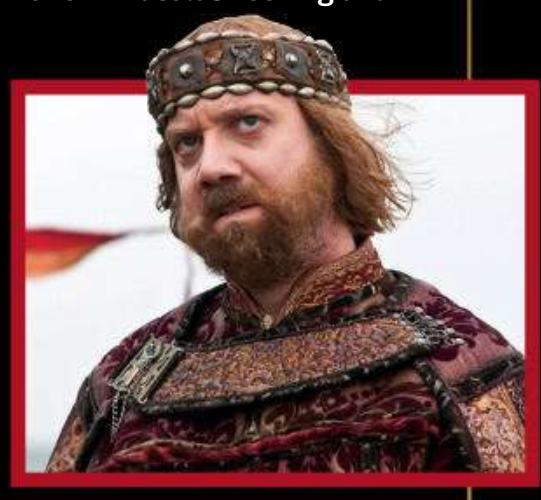
This star-studded family drama digs into the plotting and counter-plotting of the Plantagenets, with Henry II, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Richard, John and Geoffrey all vying for power and influence. Nigel Terry's John is something of a pawn in the schemes of his father and older brothers.

Robin Hood *(1973)*

A very different portrayal of Prince John than other versions, Disney's *Robin Hood* has the prince taking the throne from his brother Richard. Also he's a lion now. In this anthropomorphised rendition of the legend, John is depicted as cowardly, pampered and juvenile.

Robin Hood *(2010)*

Something of an amalgam of previous incarnations, Oscar Isaac brings a belligerent, petulant air to Prince John in Ridley Scott's version of the Robin Hood story. Here the young prince is again a pawn in the games of others, namely King Philip II of France, who thinks John's accession to the throne will destabilise England.



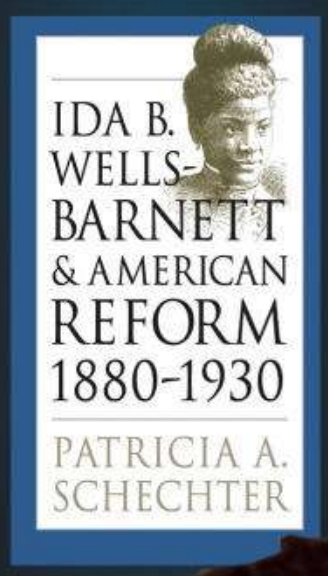
Ironclad *(2011)*

Finally breaking free of the Robin Hood story, *Ironclad* depicts the events after the signing of Magna Carta as England descends into war. Paul Giamatti brings an interesting mixture of complete confidence and volatility to his portrayal of an older and wiser John at the peak of his power.

EXPERT BIO

PROFESSOR PATRICIA A SCHECHTER

Professor Schechter works at Portland State University and is an expert in women's, public and transnational history. She is also the author of *Ida B Wells-Barnett & American Reform, 1880-1930* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001).



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IDA B WELLS

American Heroine

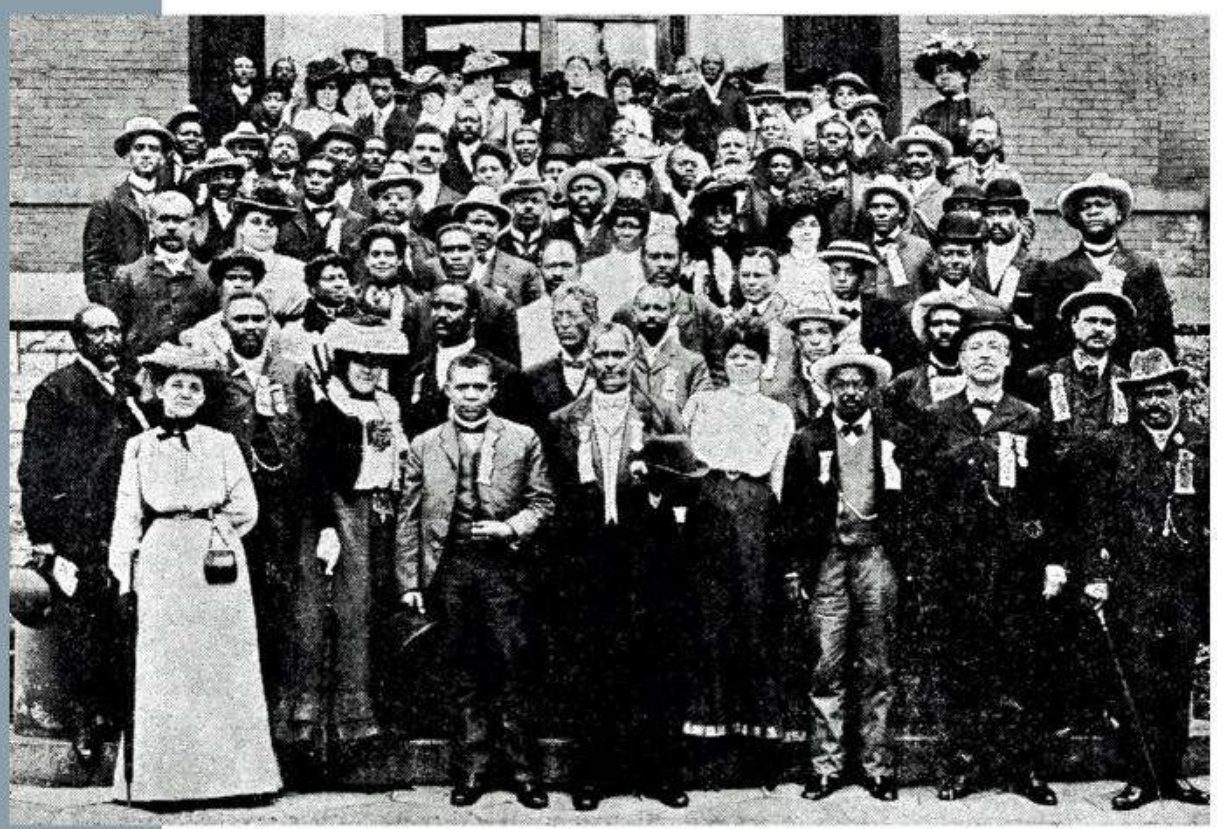
The journalist, activist and advocate shone a light on racism and the scourge of lynching in America

Written by Patricia A Schechter

In 2022, Ida B Wells is becoming visible in the United States. She was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize for journalism in 2020, and a major boulevard now carries her name in Chicago, her long-time home. The family residence is a landmark there and *The Light of Truth* monument has been installed in her honour. Academic studies have spawned a growing shelf of children's and young adult books about her, and an Ida B Wells doll just dropped as part of Mattel's Inspiring Women series. Many of these recognitions are the result of the advocacy of Wells' great-granddaughter, Michelle Duster. The Black Lives Matter movement provides context for the recovery of lost voices for racial justice in the United States – but why so late? And what is the fuller story of this previously neglected and now celebrated figure?

After the Plessy v Ferguson Supreme Court decision of 1896, 'separate but equal' became law in the United States. African Americans who faced segregation in employment, education, housing and public accommodations now lacked recourse, yet white people crossed the colour line without consequences. These conditions were normalised in the dominant society by negative, animalistic stereotypes about African Americans that circulated through a wide variety of media: newspapers, photography and, eventually, movies. The everyday enforcement of racist 'Jim Crow' laws was frequently carried out through extralegal violence, including torture and murder.

Wells intervened in this situation by examining newspaper reports in the mainstream 'white' press about racial violence, especially lynching. Lynching



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ABOVE A photo of the Afro-American Council, among them Ida B Wells and Booker T Washington

LEFT A family portrait of Wells with four of her six children. Pictured here are Charles, Herman, Ida and Alfreda in 1909

BELOW The New York office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, of which Wells was a member

referred to mob murders that spiked in the 1890s and made headlines. Lynch mobs operated at night, were often masked, and their actions were typically passed off by sheriffs and the police as committed by 'parties unknown'. In a series of news articles, pamphlets and speeches, Wells documented and exposed the violent sociology of anti-Black racism in the era of segregation. She daringly argued that sexual politics held this racist system together, and found that African American men who challenged the colour line were falsely charged with the rape of white women. At the same time, white men's assaults on Black women were not considered crimes and went unpunished. Wells tallied these horrible news stories and made some startling findings: only about 30 percent of reported lynchings involved even the charge of rape, and many African American men were put to death for disturbing the colour line. Anything from jostling a white person on the sidewalk to changing jobs without their white employer's consent was an excuse to punish or even kill a Black person. The rape charges reported in the newspapers were just a ploy used to whip up the mob and justify beatings and murder.

Wells' second discovery was equally damning: the accusation of rape was applied to cover up and punish situations of consensual sex between white women and Black men. Lurid accusations that Black men were natural rapists who could only be controlled by violence and death threats silenced discussion. Interracial marriage was illegal in the South, so sexual contact across the colour line was automatically stigmatised and illicit. In this scenario, Black women's victimisation was erased and fear of the supposedly threatening Black male became a focal point for white supremacists.

"Wells documented and exposed the violent sociology of anti-Black racism in the era of segregation"

In May 1892 Wells first published her findings in a newspaper she edited in Memphis, Tennessee, called the *Free Speech and Headlight*. Its press office was attacked and destroyed by local whites and her life was threatened. Fleeing to the north, Wells published her research in a pamphlet called *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*. As debate over tactics to combat lynching unfolded, Wells' insights and facts were appropriated and circulated by others, while she was left behind. However, for a few years, 1892-95, she was the most famous Black woman in the English-speaking world. To this day no scholar, journalist or activist has improved upon her data or her analysis of white supremacy as it functioned in her lifetime. So how did a girl born in slavery come to shape a critical inflection point in the history of civil rights activism? Fortunately, she left an autobiography and a diary that help to fill in the story.

Ida Belle Wells was born in the small town of Holly Springs, Mississippi, to parents Jim and Lizzie Wells, just at the US Civil War got underway. As the oldest of six children, she was the responsible big sister in the family. Her parents valued family life, Christian faith and education. Wells recalled her mother's pride in sending her children to school and her own satisfaction in learning to read the Bible as an adult. Her father was equally attentive to new possibilities after the war. During the years of Reconstruction, US society briefly opened up rights and opportunities for African Americans. Wells read the newspapers aloud to her father and his friends at their home, which impressed upon her the importance of literacy, current events and using one's voice. Sadly, the optimism of Wells' family life was cut short when a yellow fever epidemic swept through the Mississippi

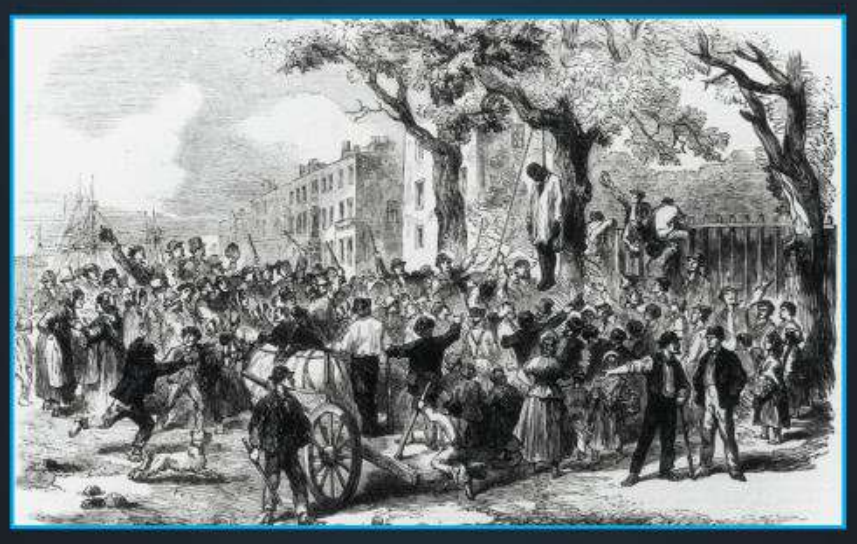
WHAT IS LYNCHING?

A brief history of vigilante 'justice' used to terrorise Black Americans

Lynching is a term commonly associated with racism against Black Americans, but what did it actually entail? A lynching is when a violent mob apprehends and executes an individual under the pretext of some kind of extrajudicial justice. Such events often involved physical abuse, torture and public humiliation before the murder of the victim. Examples of such activities span the globe throughout history.

While people of any race or background could be the victim of lynching, in America they are most commonly associated with white mobs attacking Black Americans. The statistics bear this out, with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) stating that between 1882 and 1968 4,743 recorded lynchings took place, of which 3,446 (about 72 percent) targeted Black victims.

Lynchings were used as cover to victimise and terrorise Black Americans: it was claimed the victim had committed a crime or social trespass of some description, which in turn became the pretext for attacking the individual and murdering them. The most well-known image of such a lynching involved the victim being hung from a tree, but it could also involve mutilation, decapitation or being burned alive. There are even examples of photos from lynchings being sold as souvenirs.



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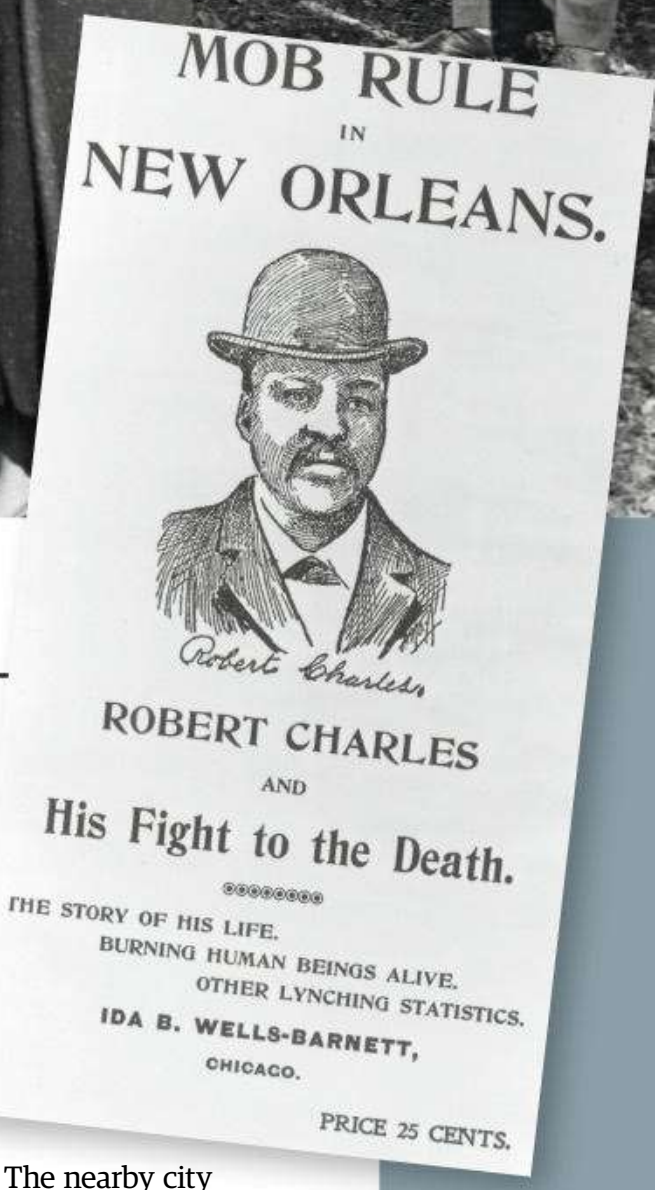

ABOVE Protesters in Washington DC demonstrate against racist violence

RIGHT An ad for Wells' book on the lynching of Robert Charles from 1900

Valley in 1878. Jim and Lizzie Wells both died, leaving their children orphans.

Friends and kin stepped forward to care for the Wells children but young Ida, aged 16, insisted that she would get a job and earn money to keep the siblings together. Yet the task was too big, and a crippled sister had to be sent to a relative's home for care. But encouraged by the spirit of 'each one teach one' in the African American community, Wells resolved to get a teaching job and keep her family together. The nearby city of Memphis offered employment opportunities and in around 1880 she moved there.

Memphis was a thriving city with a dynamic African American population. It was the birthplace of the blues, home to the musical composer WC Handy and, much later, Elvis Presley. Before 1900, Memphis boasted the first African American millionaire, Robert Church, who made his money in real estate. In addition to teaching, Wells immersed herself in numerous clubs, literary societies, theatre groups and church life. Her diary noted how she and her peers used their voices in new ways. They wrote poetry and fiction, performed Shakespeare, debated social issues, and circulated their ideas through the newspapers and church publications that flourished at that time. With Wells scripting the plan in the pages of the *Memphis Free Speech* newspaper,

Image source: wiki/Library of Congress

THE WOMEN'S CLUB MOVEMENT

As the United States remained fragmented, women came together

Post-Reconstruction America was a place of great turmoil and social unrest, but while much of the country was pulling itself apart socially and politically, many women were banding together to form groups for the betterment of their peers and neighbours. The Women's Club movement had myriad interests, often varying based on geography and the makeup of the club itself, but they typically interested themselves in public health, education and women's suffrage with a ground-up, self-help perspective. For African-American women, such clubs would also look to combat racism and inequality.

Wells was a key player in setting up some of these clubs, using them as a platform to spread her anti-lynching message. Many of these clubs saw the greatest success in the northeast of the country. In 1896 several of these Black Women's Clubs joined together to form the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, led by Mary Church Terrell. While many of these clubs were mostly interested in uplifting and educating their members they also inspired direct action, as well as organisations such as mutual benefit societies, social housing and unions for Black workers. They also organised to settle Black women arriving in the north from the southern states.

the Memphis Black community launched a successful boycott of the racially segregated street cars. Wells also brought a personal lawsuit against the Memphis C&O Railroad when a white train conductor forcibly removed her from the 'Ladies' car even though she had purchased a valid ticket. Wells won and wrote about her case, but the decision was reversed by the state supreme court in 1887. This reversal signalled a rising backlash against Black equality. In Memphis, this backlash peaked in early 1892 when three African American shopkeepers were lynched for offering competition to a nearby white grocer. Wells was godmother to the daughter of one of the victims and this event further increased her determination to mobilise against racist violence. Her exposé article in the *Memphis Free Speech* about this lynching was a watershed moment in her life: boldly speaking out meant leaving behind Memphis and her friends and family in the South forever.

Wells' reputation in journalism cushioned her landing in the north. She was welcomed by New Yorkers and began writing for the *New York Age* newspaper. African Americans in Brooklyn, Boston and Philadelphia were well organised through churches, voluntary associations and clubs, and Black women especially welcomed Wells as a refugee from the 'land of lynching' in the South and offered her speaking opportunities and funds. With this support, Wells launched a major educational campaign through the press. Two events helped give her an international audience. The first was the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago of 1893, which drew people and attention from all over

BELOW The Ida B Wells housing project in Chicago, Illinois, photographed in 1942

BELOW-RIGHT The Wells Homes, seen here in 1973, were demolished between 2002 and 2011

BOTTOM-RIGHT This monument was dedicated to Wells in 2021 and stands on the location of a public housing complex she set up in Chicago

the world. Working with US minister to Haiti, Frederick Douglass, Wells put together a pamphlet protesting Black exclusion from the fair, and the introduction of the pamphlet was translated into French and German. The second global event was the cresting of Anglo-American imperialism and the critiques of empire that began to emerge in the 1890s. Not only did indigenous people resist domination, but sympathetic whites also began to raise questions about the racism that accompanied colonialism. Some of these critics had been active in the international campaigns against slavery or were the children and grandchildren of anti-slavery activists. Most were connected to Protestant denominations that had been involved with antislavery or that were part of missionary efforts that accompanied European colonial ventures in Africa and Asia.

England had a strong antislavery heritage vested in the churches – in the 1840s and 1850s British antislavery activists had brought speakers from the US like William Lloyd Garrison and Douglass to give lectures. Former antislavery activists connected Wells to British women who were interested in educating audiences about racism by drawing their attention to lynching. Lynching in the United States would take the lives of nearly 4,000 African Americans in the decades around the turn of the 20th century, and newspapers and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic carried photographs, etchings and reports about white mobs who burned and mutilated Black bodies, creating a disturbing record that demanded redress. With the endorsement of antislavery veterans like Douglass and William Still, Wells made two speaking tours in England, one in 1892 and the other in 1894. She also wrote more pamphlets, including *United States Atrocities: Lynch Law*, which was published in London in 1894. Almost half of her autobiography is devoted to documenting her remarkable overseas speaking tours. Travelling by boat and by train, Wells spoke in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol, Newcastle, and Liverpool, as well as Edinburgh and Aberdeen. International press coverage of her speeches and activities abroad made Wells one of the best known and most controversial figures of her day.

> "Some called Wells' truth-telling heroic, others worried that it could and did provoke violent retaliation"

Controversy met her at every turn. Wells spoke and wrote about ugly and indelicate matters that were thought to be inappropriate topics for ladies. She challenged male privilege and excess, both political and sexual. She insisted that Black women and men were victims of abuse and deserved justice, and she unequivocally identified white supremacy as a fundamental threat to Christian civilisation. Some called her truth-telling heroic, others worried that it could and did provoke violent retaliation. Even some people in the African American community urged her to moderation. Wells also faced resistance from powerful white women, like Frances Willard, leader of the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and from Susan B Anthony, the famous suffragist. Willard tried to appease Southern white women in her temperance organisation by refraining from condemning lynching. Wells married in 1895 and began a family of her own but Anthony opined that being a wife and mother compromised a woman's ability to be a leader.

This push-back took some of the steam out of the anti-lynching campaign, even as lynching continued almost unabated. Despair could be heard in some quarters. Voices of accommodation gathered around the Alabama educator Booker T Washington and, later, his popular National Negro Business League. When New Yorkers mobilised to establish the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909, the now Mrs Ida B Wells-Barnett was present but not welcomed. Leadership fell to WEB DuBois and Mary Church Terrell, daughter of Robert Church of Memphis. Both of these figures held prestigious graduate degrees and had access to elite social circles and philanthropic pockets that Wells-Barnett could not match.

Her marriage to Chicago lawyer Ferdinand L Barnett in 1895 rooted Ida in that city for the rest of her life. Barnett was an activist and a newspaper man, and the couple published the *Chicago Conservator* for a few years together. In addition to raising four children, Wells-Barnett remained politically active, especially since women citizens could vote after 1920. Through the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the networks of Black women's clubs, Wells-Barnett pressed for school and prison reform and, of course, for anti-lynching legislation, which passed in Illinois in 1905. She continued with her investigative journalism and published her findings about race riots in East S Louis, Illinois, and Elaine, Arkansas, as pamphlets during World War I. In Chicago, Wells-Barnett established a social service bureau called the Negro Fellowship League, organised the Alpha Suffrage Club for Black women voters, and ran for elective office herself in 1930. Though unsuccessful in that campaign, Ida B Wells-Barnett was a catalyst for racial justice and a pillar of her family and community until her death the next year, at the age of 68.

The origins of

El Dorado

The promised land of gold, is so famous it seems to float free of history. But where did it begin?

Written by Mathew Lyons

In the last days of 1835 the explorer Robert Schomburgk stood on the shores of Lake Amucu in western-central Guiana. In April the surrounding savannah would be inundated by the rising tides of two nearby river systems – creating the illusion of a great body of water – but now, in December, the waters were low. All Schomburgk could see were rushes broken by the occasional glimpse of clear water. The brook feeding the lake was some three yards wide. The sense of bathos was overwhelming; he uses the word 'scarcely' three times in as many sentences.

And yet Schomburgk was in no sense displeased. He was there not because he thought it to be the site of Lake Parima, on whose glittering shores El Dorado was said by some to be located; Schomburgk was there because he knew that it wasn't. He wanted to be the first man to stand where El Dorado might have been, were it not fantasy.

It's a powerful myth that can draw a man halfway around the world to see for himself its refutation. But that's El Dorado. By 1835, it was already three centuries old. Its beginnings are unclear – not so much shrouded in mystery as cloudy with hearsay and rumour, with false memories and Renaissance imaginations stunned into wonder by the strangeness and heat of the New World. It is indivisible from the Spanish conquest of Central and South America. It is, in some respects, the quintessential expression of the dream of conquistador exploration: unimaginable wealth that's there for the taking if one is sufficiently rapacious, sufficiently cruel, sufficiently resolute.

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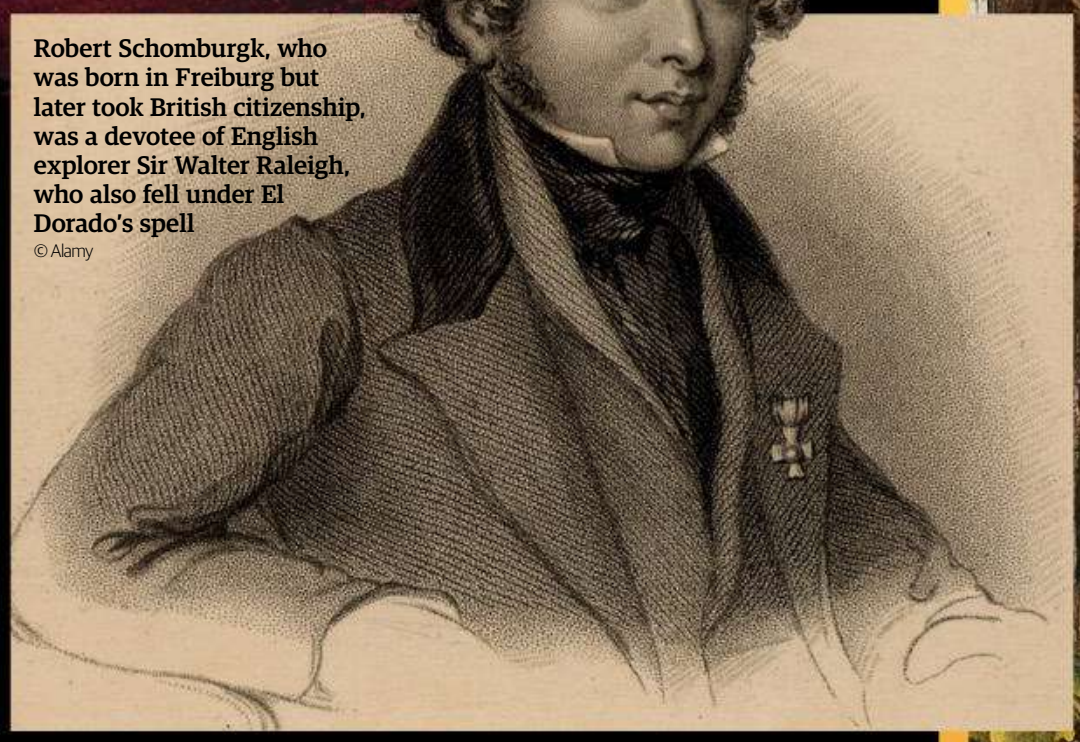


Robert Schomburgk, who was born in Freiburg but later took British citizenship, was a devotee of English explorer Sir Walter Raleigh, who also fell under El Dorado's spell
© Alamy

What follows, insofar as it is knowable, is the story of El Dorado's origins. And, like all good origin stories, there are more than one of them.

The best known version doesn't enter the record until Juan de Castellanos, a conquistador-turned-priest, included it as part of his epic verse history of Spanish heroism in the Americas, *Elegías de varones ilustres de Indias*, likely written in the 1570s. The story relates to the chief of a Muisca tribe who inhabited a large plateau – the conquistadors knew it as Cundinamarca – high in the eastern range of the Andes in what is now Colombia. Once a year, the chief would cover himself from head to foot in turpentine and gold dust; hence el dorado, the golden one. He took a barge out into the middle of Lake Guatavita, a small, almost circular crater lake sunk in the mountain. The chief's people would look on, voices raised in song, as he made an offering of treasure, gold and emeralds to the lake. Then he would dive in – the signal for a festival to begin.

There is a catch, though. There is no record of anyone actually having seen this ritual. It was said to have been discontinued some 40 or 50 years before the Spanish arrived, suppressed when the tribe in question was subjugated to the nearby Muisca of Bacatá – now Bogota, the Colombian capital – by its zipa, or ruler, Nemequene. So even as recounted here it was already a memorial practice when the Spanish first encountered it, something receding from living memory into the haze of a once-told remembered story, something powerful and ancient.

Yet there is a second version of this origin story. It dates to 1541, some 20 years after Cortez had conquered the Aztecs and just eight years after the Incan emperor Atahualpa had been murdered by Francisco Pizarro and the first Incan gold had reached Spain. Which is to say, from a period in which the Spanish knew little of the continent beyond a few small toeholds at its edges, when everything was fluid and unknowable and anything seemed possible. Surely there were more empires than two in the vast expanses of which the Spanish understood nothing? And besides, weren't there persistent rumours, fuelled by a queasy mixture of greed and hope, that the Spanish had never found the better part of the Incan treasure, that in the chaos of conquest it had been spirited away to some unknown redoubt?

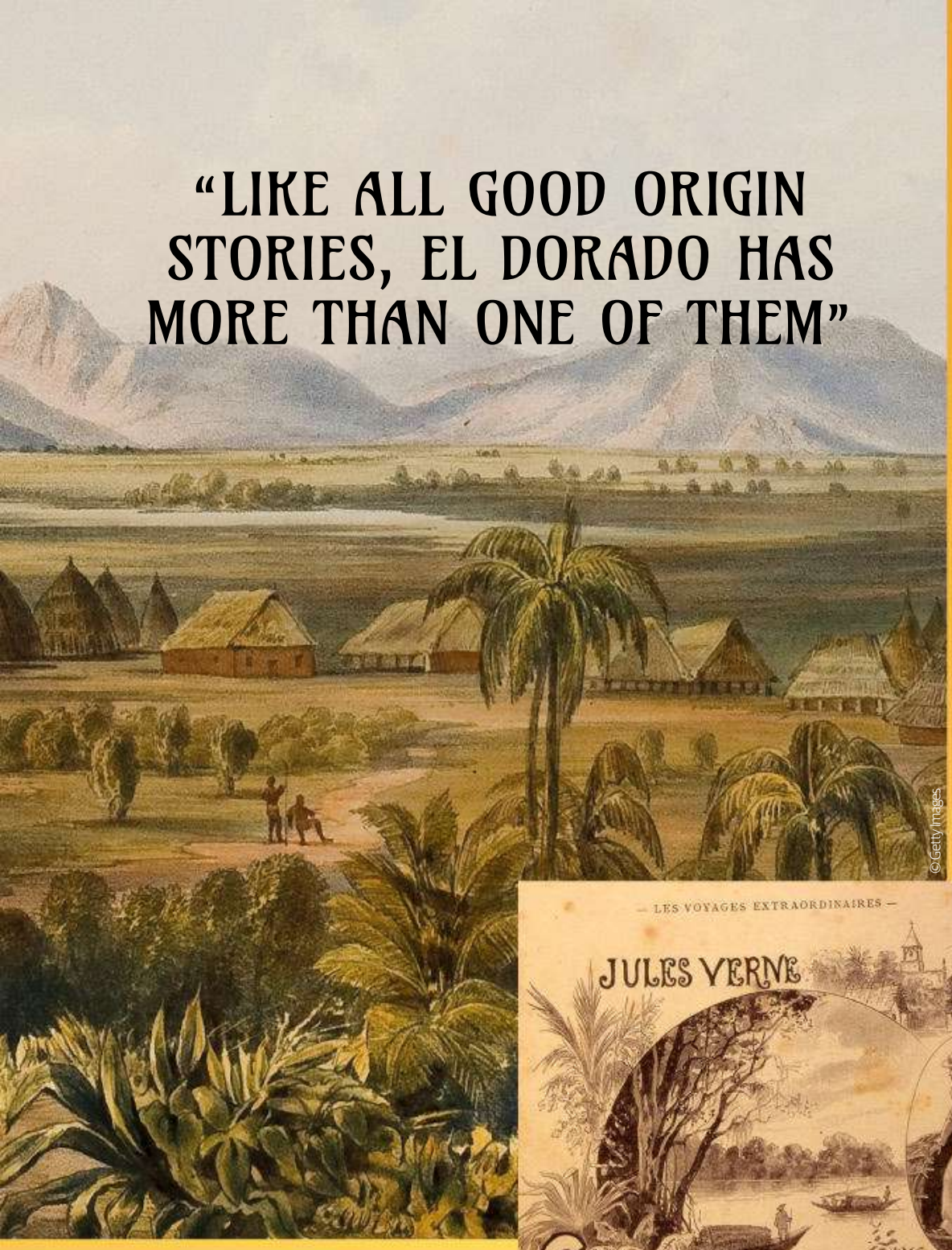
Arguably, in fact, the 1541 iteration of the El Dorado myth is the first. And yet, in the way that so many things to do with El Dorado seem paradoxical, it looks to be an elaboration of the story that Castellanos told 30 years later. It is found in the writings of a conquistador named Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo and it takes place in Quito in northern Ecuador, territory then newly conquered as part of the Spanish destruction of the Incas. As Oviedo heard it, El Dorado was a "great lord or monarch [who] constantly goes about covered with gold... as fine as ground salt; for it is his opinion that to wear any other adornment is less beautifying... but to powder one's self with gold is an extraordinary thing, unusual and new and more costly."

BELOW Although the Muisca didn't have direct access to gold, they were skilled craftspeople producing work of exceptional quality
© Getty Images

So even as early as 1541 there is no clarity about what El Dorado is or was. One conquistador put together a small force of men and left Quito in February that year in search of the land of this king. He is Gonzales Pizarro, brother of Francisco. But Pizarro, writing about his entrada, as the Spanish called their explorations, describes El Dorado as a lake, not a man. Had he heard a different iteration of the myth to Oviedo? A third contemporary source, the chronicler Pedro de Cieza de León, describing the very same expedition, writes of El Dorado as a valley.

Already then, right from the beginning, El Dorado isn't a single idea, it's a confluence of ideas. El Dorado is a man, a lake, a valley. It is a place that is always beyond wherever you are – further up river, further up in the highlands, deeper into the interior – in the same way that the gold it contains is greater in abundance than any yet found, great beyond comprehension. To make El Dorado manageable, it's given a name, a direction, a geography, an identity. But really it is the unimaginability of it that's the lure. Further. Greater. Richer. More.

"LIKE ALL GOOD ORIGIN STORIES, EL DORADO HAS MORE THAN ONE OF THEM"



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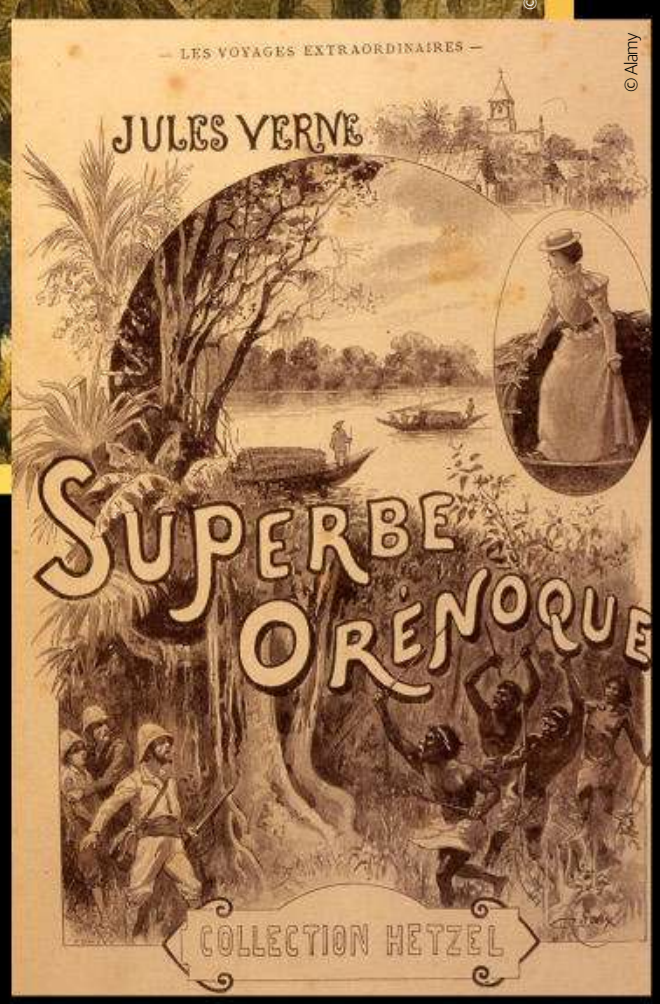

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Pizarro plunged east from Quito with several hundred conquistadors (sources vary between 220 and 340) and 4,000 native servants – although slaves might be the better word: they had been kept in chains and shackles – together with horses, llamas, some 2,000 hogs and a similar number of hunting dogs. Pizarro expected shortly to find civilisation: open land, tilled fields, villages and towns. Instead, marching for weeks and months through the darkness of the rain forest in the rainy season, across mountains, marshes and rivers, he found nothing but – in the words of Cieza de León – hardship, famine and misery. Along the way, locals were captured and interrogated. When they didn't come up with the answers Pizarro wanted, they were tortured on racks. Some were then burnt alive. Others were fed to the dogs. As the year's end approached, things became desperate. All the hogs were dead. There were no slaves left – some had escaped, most had died. Around half the Spanish were still standing.

They came to a great river, most likely the Coca, just south of the equator in what's now northern Ecuador. There a local tribal chief named Delicola, having heard of the cruelties the Spanish had visited on those they questioned, told them what they wanted to hear. There were "very great populations further on," downriver, he told them, and "very rich regions full of powerful lords." Pizarro ordered a boat to be built to carry men and supplies downstream while the remaining men and

TOP *Prirara and Lake Amucu – The Site of El Dorado*, c.1841

ABOVE In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, renewed interest in the exploration of South America inspired many novels, include Jules Verne's *The Mighty Orinoco* and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*

The German conquistadors

How German bankers and men of war played their part in the conquest

The presence of Nikolaus Federmann among the conquistadors in Colombia is a reminder that, while the overwhelming majority of them were Spanish, the picture is more complicated than is often thought.

The typical party of conquistadors was comprised largely of poor Spanish men from Andalusia, Castile and Extremadura, men who had made their way to Seville and thence to San Lúcar de Barrameda, where the Guadalquivir flows into the Atlantic, and where most journeys to South America began.

But they included a not-insignificant smattering of foreigners: Dutch, Fleming, German, Italian, Albanian, English, Scots and so on. And among these, certainly for a period in the 1530s, the Germans were far and away the most prominent. That's because in 1528 the emperor Charles V owed the Welser banking family of Augsburg 143,000 florins. Unable to pay, Charles licensed them the province of Venezuela instead, reserving for himself the usual 20 percent on treasure found, and likewise on slaves – a state of affairs that lasted until 1546.

Federmann's was only one of several German-led expeditions that criss-crossed the region in this period; other German conquistadors included George Hohermuth, whose name the Spanish found unpronounceable (he is typically Jorge Espira, 'George from Speyer' in their accounts) and Philip von Hutten.

One of the first, under Ambrosius Ehinger (the Spanish struggled with that name too) did in fact gather some 184kg of gold, mostly through extortion and violence. But it cost the lives of almost everyone involved, including Ehinger. When the survivors returned to Coro, the Venezuelan capital, after two years away, they revealed they had buried the treasure under a tree. They never found it again.

Image source: wiki/DZankell

RIGHT Nikolaus Federmann was one of a number of German conquistadors

horses made their way along the shore. They proceeded this way for 43 days but they found little food and no people.

One of Pizarro's men, Francisco de Orellana, volunteered to take the boat and some 50 men to find food and return. He would "bring back provisions as soon as he could," he told Pizarro. "There need be no doubt about that." It was December 1541. Orellana did, ultimately, find food, but he did not return. Instead, he and his men found the Amazon – which they knew as the Marañón – and they rode its length for months, reaching the Atlantic on 26 August 1542. Orellana claimed he had no choice but to press on, driven both by mutinous men and the sheer force of the great river.

Pizarro called it treason. He turned his remaining men around and made their way slowly back to Quito. They ate their dogs and their horses; they boiled up their saddles and stirrup leathers and roasted them over ashes. They were, one source says, in a "fury of hunger." Somehow they made it, staggering into Quito in June.

In some ways this is the archetypal El Dorado story. In part because it was, of course, unsuccessful, trailing death and deadly accusations in its wake. But also because it illustrates one surprising truth about the myth: it was one of the principal drivers for the European exploration of South America north of the equator.

Pizarro's was the first explicit attempt to find El Dorado. But you can see how well El Dorado articulated the Spanish dream of the Americas by the fact that, once it was described, conquistadors started retrospectively claiming that their journeys of exploration into the interior had been in search of it. To put it another way, it took time before the Spanish learned to give the name El Dorado to the thing they had sought.

You can see this process at work most clearly in the story of Sebastian de Benalcázar, Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada and Nikolaus Federmann. Setting out from, respectively, Quito, Santa Marta and Coro, entirely ignorant of each other's ambitions, they all made their way to Cundinamarca in the highlands in the eastern cordillera of the Andes, where they encountered the Muisca people and, early in 1539, each other. Both Quesada and Federmann had heard tell of a rich province called Meta, after the river of that name which is a major tributary of the Orinoco. Quesada was seeking it up the river Magdalena, Federmann by following the line of the mountains and searching for a pass. Each had set out in 1536. It's not clear what information Benalcázar, coming from Quito through

Lake Guatavita

When the dream of El Dorado ended, not all its gold was forgotten

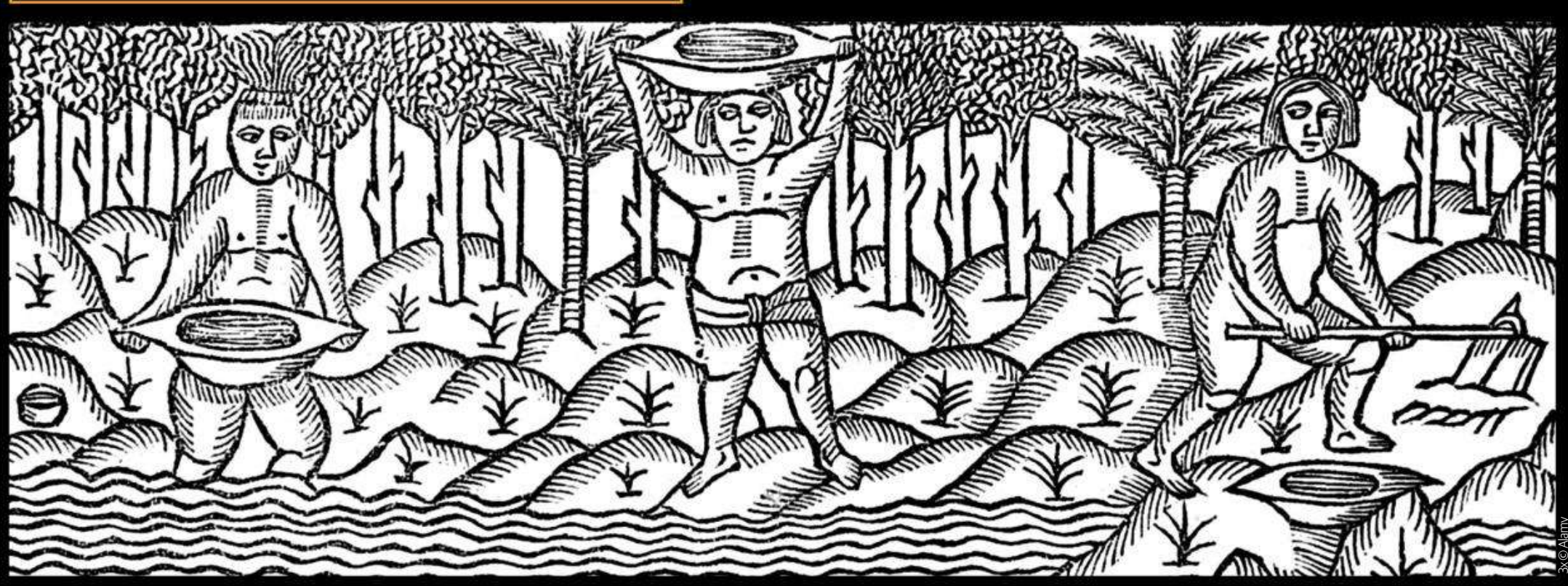
Long after the afterglow of what Schomburgk had called "that delusive bubble El Dorado" had ceased to enchant people, interest persisted in the stories of golden offerings made to Lake Guatavita – and the value of what therefore lay buried beneath its waters.

In fact, the first attempt to drain the lake was made as early as 1540 by Hernán Perez de Quesada, brother of Gonzalo Jiménez. The British naval engineer Charles Cochrane, who visited the site in the early 19th century to make his own attempts, reported one contemporary estimate that supposedly placed the value of the gold and precious stones cast into the lake as £1.12 billion, something like £107 billion in today's money.

Efforts continued into the 20th century, with one team in 1910-11 finding some 62 artefacts, which were promptly put up for auction at Sotheby's. However they found that, once drained, the mud on the lake floor almost immediately hardened like rock, making it almost impossible, with the available technology, to extract any more pieces before the lake began to fill up again. They reportedly found $10,000-worth of gold – having spent some $160,000 to find it.

© GettyImages

BELOW An image depicting panning for gold from Oviedo's *La Historia General de las Indias*, 1535



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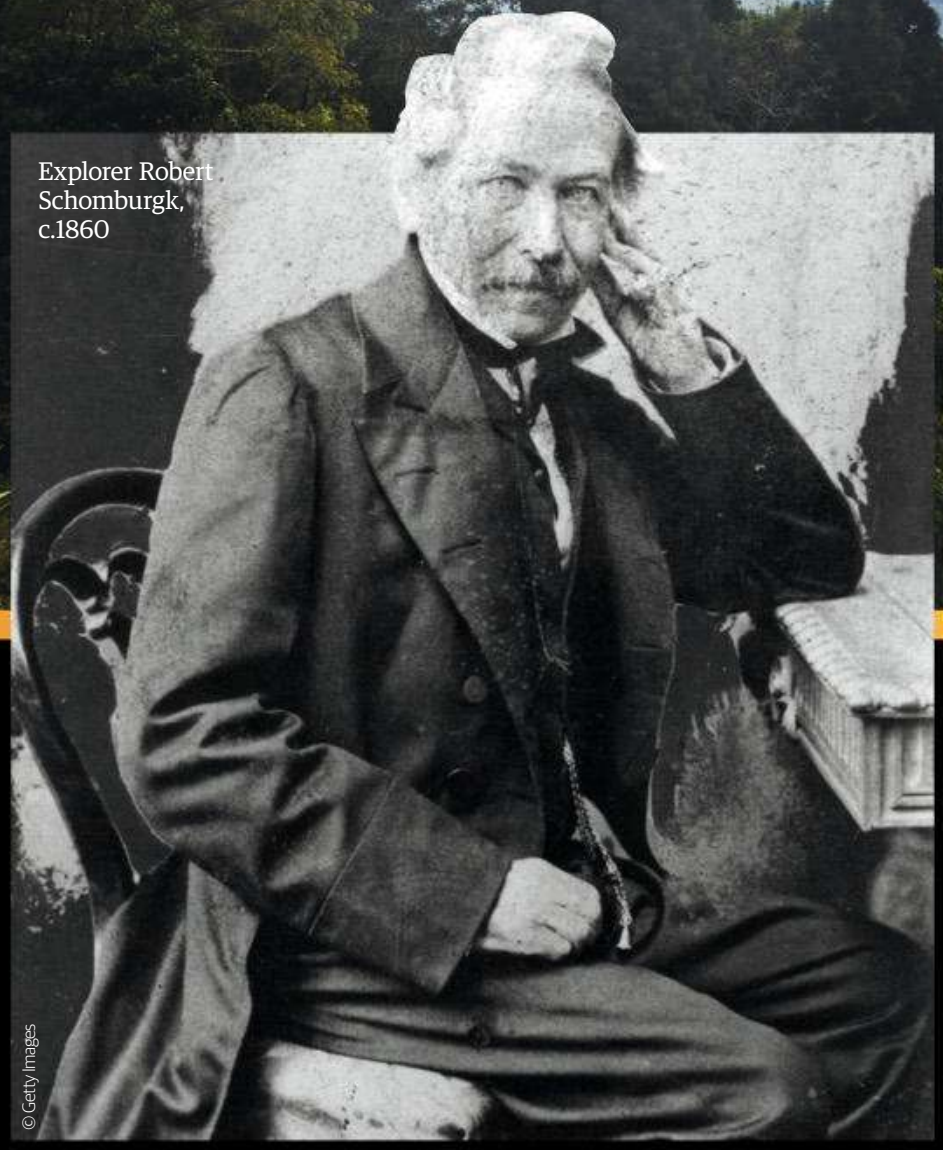


Explorer Robert Schomburgk, c.1860

© Getty Images

"THEY ATE THEIR DOGS AND THEIR HORSES AND BOILED UP THEIR SADDLES AND STIRRUP LEATHERS IN A FURY OF HUNGER"

Popayan in 1538, was acting on, but there is another origin story to El Dorado that may explain it.

Benalcázar had conquered Quito on behalf of the Spanish, defeating the Incan general Rumiñavi in 1534. It was said that among those captured with Rumiñavi had been a native chief, whom the Spanish referred to as el indio dorado. He came from a rich land some 12 days north of Quito called Cundi rumarca. The Muisca highlands, in other words.

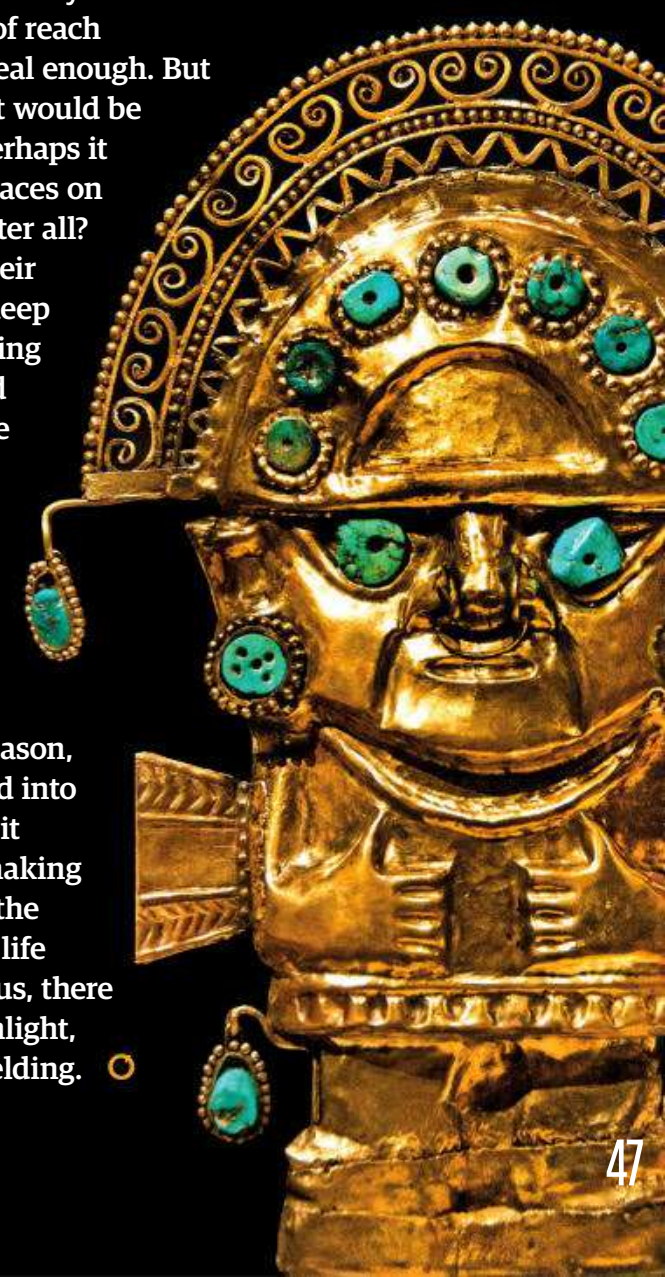
Was that what drove Benalcázar on? He made no mention of it at the time, but later both he and Quesada would claim that when they sought the Muisca they had been looking for El Dorado all along. And perhaps Cundinamarca really was El Dorado after all. Certainly, the fact that three separate expeditions could follow rumours from such far-flung locations and arrive in precisely the same place suggests that at least some of the information the conquistadors received was remarkably accurate. And there was gold there: Quesada accumulated some 621kg of it. The Muisca did not mine it, however; what gold they had they gathered through trade.

For most conquistadors, then, this high plateau in the Andes could not be El Dorado because it wasn't rich enough. The search for it went on, the location simply changed. Countless expeditions followed, east of the Muisca, and north, seeking El Dorado among the Omagua people of the Amazon basin, at the headwaters of the Orinoco, and so on. The madness and terror of Lope de Aguirre's trek down the Amazon in 1561, for example, was still recalled by the people of the region when Alexander von Humboldt came that way at the turn of the 19th century; on the Guianan savannah the local ignis fatuus was known as 'the soul of the tyrant Aguirre'.

So where was El Dorado? It was where it had always been: elsewhere. Its promise of gold – reachable, out of reach – persisting. Not quite an illusion, never quite real enough. But if El Dorado didn't exist, it was inevitable that it would be invented. It was what the Americas were for. Perhaps it was necessary to invent it. It filled the blank spaces on the map. What do people see in such spaces, after all? It's where they project their hopes and fears, their terrors and greeds. In the deep sea, monsters; deep in the interior, gold and other treasure. Something to be retrieved from the unknown, to be melted down and reshaped into a thing of known value – as value was understood in Europe.

However, there is another way to view El Dorado: not as a metaphor for the Spanish colonial enterprise and the drive to conquer and possess, but as a metaphor for the pre-Colombian Americas, for the part of it the Spanish and English couldn't capture or erase, couldn't itemise in the ledgers of empire and reason, couldn't crush or despoil. It had already receded into memory by the time the Europeans arrived, so it remains a pristine thing: a gold-skinned man making his gifts to the old gods, his body slipping into the immaculate water of a mountain lake; a way of life remembered, something lost, something precious, there and gone in the arc of a dive, flashing in the sunlight, dazzling in the mind's eye, tenacious and unyielding.

ABOVE When three separate conquistador expeditions found their way to the high plateau of Cundinamarca at the same time, had they found the true El Dorado?



BLOOD, METAL, AND DUST

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have dominated the first 20 years of the 21st century. Understanding them may take many more

Written by Murray Dahm

In his indispensable examination of the conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 21st century *Blood, Metal and Dust*, author Brigadier (Rtd) Ben Barry gives readers informed, insightful and altogether essential analyses of those conflicts. Originally published in 2020, the events of 2021 in Afghanistan showed that the book was indeed prescient about the end of the conflict, and a second edition has just been released.

The dark days of late-2001 are seared on the memories of all who lived through them. The rapid reaction to the attacks of 11 September 2001, and the building of a wide coalition to fight the 'war on terror', as well as the escalation of the conflict into Iraq, reveal several remarkable lessons learned from the previous quarter-century of conflict. There were also mistakes and missteps made that informed (and should continue to inform) military and political thinking and decision making. Here we summarise some of the main points from Barry's book to give greater insight into the conflicts.

Reaction to 9/11

One factor in the response to the events of 11 September was how rapid the response was. US General Tommy Franks, commander of USCENTCOM (United States Central Command), presented a plan for the destruction of Al-Qaeda and the removal of the Taliban government of Afghanistan by 21 September. By 7 October airstrikes had begun against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. There were, however, missteps already by this point – Bush referring to the war on terrorism as a "crusade" and the original operation name (Operation Infinite Justice) was offensive to the Muslim majority of Afghanistan. In many ways, the rapid response was counter to the then-current trends in warfare. Since the 1980s, much had been spent on modern equipment for defence against the Soviet Union and the long build-up of Operation Desert Shield to Operation Desert Storm in 1990-91 was perhaps the model most expected to be followed in 2001. Operation Desert ▶

Image source: wiki/Master Sgt Chris Spence

ABOVE US Special Forces (of Task Force Dagger) riding with Northern Alliance Afghan troops early in the conflict (Dari-a-Souf Valley, Afghanistan, October 2001)

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RIGHT The September 11 atrocity led to almost immediate US attacks on Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan

Shield had built up forces from August 1990 to January 1991, followed by airstrikes and an invasion that lasted only slightly longer than a month from 17 January to 28 February 1991. Although UN condemnation of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 was immediate, the response involved sanctions and a relatively slow build-up of resources – the first strikes against Iraqi forces only coming in January 1991. In 2001, airstrikes began less than a month after the attacks of 11 September.

Another factor in the response was also perhaps counter to the trends of then-modern war. The national trauma of the war in Vietnam led the US away from the Draft (thereafter, US forces would all be volunteers) and the continuing Cold War led to a concentration on defence. The focus moved away from small wars and 'counterinsurgency' except in a few areas (the US Special Forces and Marines especially). The conventional build-up of forces could be expected for Afghanistan; something that would have taken six months, just as it had in 1990. The coalition of the Gulf War, and the slow build-up of resources from those 35 member states would not, however, be followed. US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld wanted troops on the ground immediately and this entailed the use of US Special Forces and those other units capable of such deployment. Franks was able to respond to Rumsfeld's demands in less than a day, incorporating a plan for troops on the ground using US Special Forces on 22 September 2001. Expertise in small wars and counterinsurgency would, therefore, come into their own in Afghanistan and thereafter in Iraq.

What is more, the US knew that neither the British Empire nor the Russian invasion (1979-89) had had much success with conventional campaigning in the region. Another important factor therefore was the reactivation of CIA contacts in the region (the US military had no such contacts in Central Asia). The CIA had maintained an interest in small wars and paramilitary expeditions and operations. These contacts, including local warlords, were incentivised to attack Al-Qaeda with coalition air support. Barry believes the CIA should be given great credit for this aspect of the conflict.

Wide coalition and missteps

The widespread condemnation of the terrorist attacks led, very quickly, to a broad coalition of forces determined to fight against whatever enemy needed to be defeated in Operation Enduring

RIGHT Some lessons on conducting wars through coalitions were learned from Kosovo, other lessons, however, were not absorbed or were ignored

© Alamy

LEFT There would be no long-term build up to the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 as there had been in 1990's Gulf War

LEFT George Bush's 'Mission Accomplished' speech was one of several missteps taken in the conduct of the war

"Riveting … required reading for the policymaker and the practitioner alike."
BEN BARRY
BLOOD, METAL AND DUST
REVISED AND UPDATED
Blood, Metal and Dust
BY BEN BARRY IS AVAILABLE NOW FROM OSPREY PUBLISHING

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Freedom (2001-14). In the early days, this coalition included forces from Iran and Syria but President Bush's 'Axis of Evil' speech in January 2002 undermined their cooperation. The coalition continued without these partners. Another error of judgement occurred with the 'Mission Accomplished' speech of 2 May 2003. This was probably intended to add legitimacy to the war in Iraq, but the conflict soon descended into guerrilla warfare and insurgency. It should be noted that Bush never stated 'mission accomplished' but the banner with the words 'Mission Accomplished' was hung behind him on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and this has given the name to the speech.

Lessons learned from Bosnia and Kosovo in the late-1990s also showed the US the limitations of a United Nations or NATO coalition forces. Operation Enduring Freedom would be a US-led coalition to remove Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Whereas in those earlier coalitions, each member nation had to approve actions taken by its troops (something the US found incredibly frustrating), such 'red-tape' would not be a factor in the early response in Afghanistan and Iraq. Those limitations would reveal themselves once more as the conflict wore on and the coalition evolved to include NATO from 2004 onwards. What is more, the early coalition was a relatively informal one; we don't know if offers of contributions were turned away. Other lessons that were not learned was the idea of coalition forces coming in as liberators (an idea present in Bosnia and Kosovo that was shown to be false). It was also the way conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq were presented – the coalition as liberators – but it is clear those ideas were not held by local populations no matter how much the message was presented in the homes of the coalition nations.

One factor in the rapid response was the immense confidence projected by Rumsfeld. Although controversial, Rumsfeld was determined for the need for rapid action and his leadership gave the mission a clear directive. He also wanted to see a connection to Iraq immediately. Certain parties within US politics and the military saw Iraq as 'unfinished business'. This attitude was not, however, shared by other coalition partners such as the United Kingdom. The escalation into Iraq would take some time but it was considered early, even on the afternoon of 11 September 2001. Rumsfeld intimated the conflict would spread on 7 October when he said: "Our objective is to defeat those who use terrorism and those who house or support them." Although Iraq was not named (and continued not to be in the following months), it was a clear objective, something that was ramped up in the context of the search for (non-existent) weapons of mass destruction from 2002 onwards and that culminated in the invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

Aftermath

The war in Afghanistan and Iraq has changed the way modern war is waged and the thinking on waging war in general. The ultimate failures of the campaign in Afghanistan as well as other failures and missteps in current campaigns mean that there is still much to learn about what went right and what went wrong in these conflicts. Thinking about how they began and evolved is time well spent.

"Certain parties within US politics and the military saw Iraq as 'unfinished business'"

BELOW
Donald Rumsfeld (left) and General Tommy Franks were largely responsible for the rapid response and nature of the conflict in 2001

The Marquis of Madness and Malice

The originator of the term 'sadism', the Marquis de Sade was known for a life of salacious scandal. But was he truly as debauched as the works he authored?

Written by Callum McKelvie

The Marquis de Sade is a figure with two sides. He has been read and appreciated by the serial killer Ted Bundy as well as surrealist artists such as Man Ray and Salvador Dali. Napoleon Bonaparte condemned his novels *Justine* and *Juliette*, stating that they were among "the most abominable books ever engendered by the most depraved imagination." Yet in 2016 Penguin Classics released *The 120 Days of Sodom*, De Sade's most controversial and sexually violent novel, under its prestigious banner, and a year later France declared the original manuscript to be a national treasure. Centuries after his death, De Sade continues to divide opinion, with scholars torn between rehabilitating him as a man who defied convention or condemning him as a monster and perverse deviant. But just who was this man whose extreme and violent writing can delight the academic and offend the prudish in equal measure?

Born in 1740 in Paris, the Marquis de Sade (byname of Donatien-Alphonse-François, Comte de Sade) was from noble stock and for a long time looked set for a prestigious military career. At the age of 14 the young man enrolled in the army and, despite his youth, his aristocratic background meant he was entitled to an officer's commission, eventually reaching the rank of colonel. Although he seems to have excelled as an officer, serving with distinction in the Seven Years' War, his behaviour on leave had already begun to earn him a scandalous reputation. De Sade became known for racking up debts due to excessive gambling and having an exhaustive sexual appetite, something that would grow as he found new avenues to explore.

In 1762 he left the army and, at the urging of his father, married Renée-Pélagie de Montreuil despite having actually been courting her younger sister, Anne-Prospère. Perhaps the elder De Sade had hoped the engagement would put an end to his son's scandalous behaviour, but if so his hopes were in vain. Despite his marriage, De Sade continued the affair with Anne, as well as others with numerous sex workers. Renting a small apartment on the Rue Mouffetard, he used it as a base from which he could continue his liaisons and indulge his violent sexual fantasies. Several of these sex workers reported De Sade and claimed he had physically abused them. Eventually, in 1763, one of these accusers, Jeanne Testard, stated that he had used ▶

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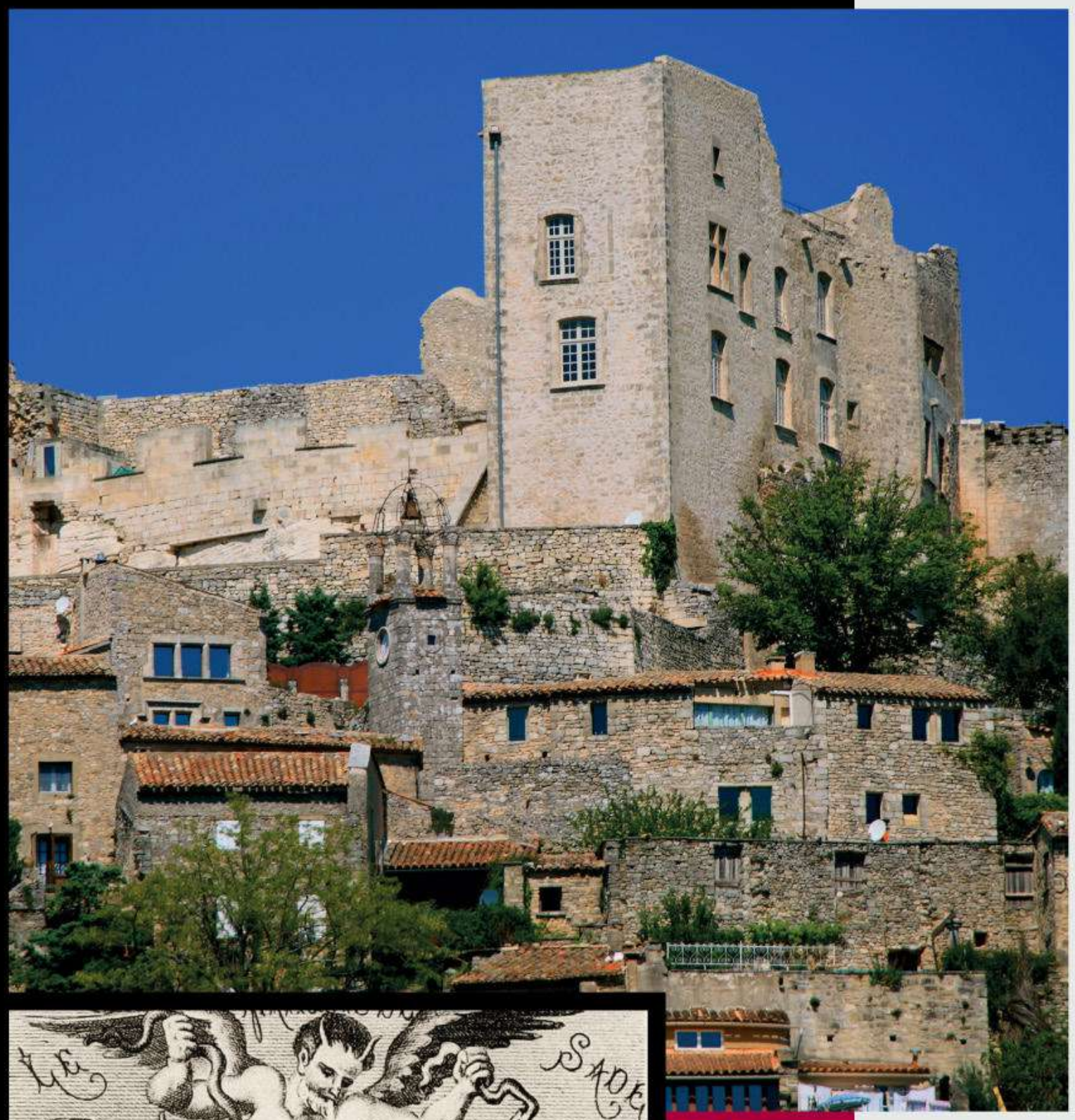
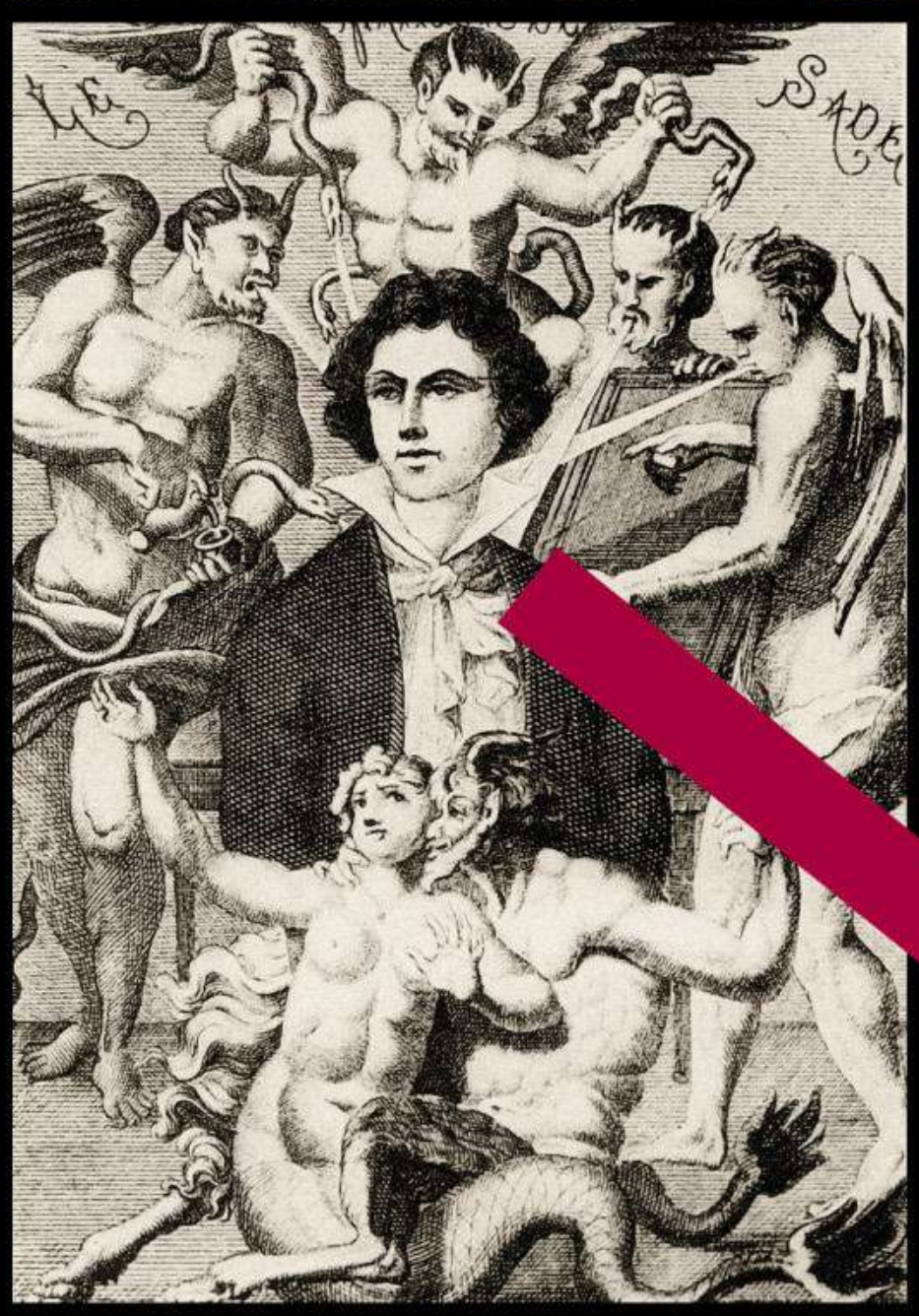




ABOVE The village of Lacoste, with the chateau once owned by De Sade

TOP-RIGHT A scene from the 1967 film Marat/Sade

ABOVE-RIGHT The front piece to *Justine*, one De Sade's most shocking works, which Napoleon referred to as "abominable"

LEFT A portrait of De Sade by H Biberstein shows him beset by demons

blasphemous language and engaged in blasphemous acts, for which De Sade was imprisoned. But this transgression would prove to be merely the tip of the iceberg and was nothing compared to the scandals that, in the following years, would ensure his name would live on in infamy.

Once released, De Sade immediately began hosting orgies at the Château de Lacoste, a property that would play host to numerous depraved acts. He also seems to have developed a taste for theatrical talent and could often be found prowling around the Paris Opera House, seeking young actresses to sleep with. Despite giving birth to his first son in 1767, it was a mere year later in 1768 that the Rose Keller scandal erupted. Exactly what occurred remains a subject of debate and De Sade himself continuously rejected the allegations made against him, leading to a number of varying accounts. Some state clearly that Keller was a sex-worker, but others claim she was a 30-year-old widow reduced to begging. In this version, she was offered a job by De Sade as a housekeeper and returned with him to his home. Once there, he ordered her to strip and when she refused to do so, threatened her life, drawing a pistol on her. Terrified, she did as she was commanded and was then bound and whipped. Held prisoner for several days, she was tortured by De Sade with a knife and melted wax. After some time she escaped, and although the case never made it to court (De Sade offered her a large settlement) the damage to his reputation was done. Not only this, but it

also ensured the wrath of his mother-in-law who, tired of his deviant ways, sought extreme measures to put a stop to them once and for all. She achieved this by obtaining a lettre de cachet, a document signed by the king and countersigned by the secretary of state that could immediately authorise an individual's imprisonment.

As a result De Sade could no longer return to Paris, but this does not appear to have tempered his habits as in 1772 he was the subject of yet another scandal. Having travelled to Marseille with his manservant Latour, he arranged an orgy with a group of sex workers who, during the various athletic activities, helped themselves liberally to sweets from De Sade's pillbox. However, later it was discovered that the sweets had been laced with 'Spanish Fly', an aphrodisiac but also a poison. Fearing arrest, De Sade fled to the estate of the king of Sardinia but found no such sanctuary and both were quickly apprehended. What caused more outrage was that it very quickly became apparent that during the orgy De Sade had partaken in various acts of sodomy, not just with the sex workers but also with Latour. To the 18th century French public this was a scandalous crime, though it would be legalised in 1791 during the revolution. For his actions, De Sade was condemned to death in absentia and on the 12 September 1772 was symbolically executed in effigy. Briefly imprisoned at the Fortress of Miolans at Savoy, he'd managed to escape through a window, making his way finally back to La Coste.

It was at La Coste that even more horrendous crimes are said to have taken place. In the winter of 1775, De Sade

> "They were kept prisoner and forced to participate in a number of sexual acts"

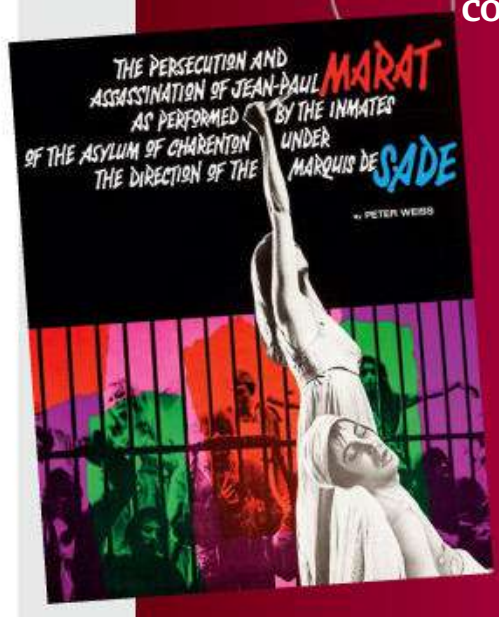
appears to have hired a number of underage girls as servants and a slightly older male 'secretary'. Purportedly, they were kept prisoner against their will for a period of six weeks and forced to participate in a number of sexual acts, though little is known about this event. He also continued to hire and abuse other servants and in 1777 the father of one, Catherine Trillet (who, particularly in light of his later novel, De Sade had distressingly begun to refer to as 'Justine') ventured to the chateau to retrieve her, no doubt having heard of the sadistic acts that were being committed. When his daughter refused to leave with him, he is said to have drawn a gun on De Sade and fired at point-blank range. If this is true then De Sade must have had the luck of the devil, because the gun misfired. However, this luck finally ran out when he was tricked into returning to Paris to visit his supposedly ill mother, where he was promptly arrested by the authorities.

Of course De Sade was technically still under the sentence of death, but while he was able to have this lifted he was not spared the horrors of a jail cell at Vincennes and later at Paris' most notorious establishment, the Bastille. He would spend 13 years behind bars and it was here that his writing career began in earnest, using it to overcome his anger and depression. Perhaps it should come as no surprise, due to the kind of man De Sade was and the situation in which these works were composed, that the resultant body of work is extremely graphic. The most infamous of these pieces has a story just as dramatic and sensational as the life of the author himself.

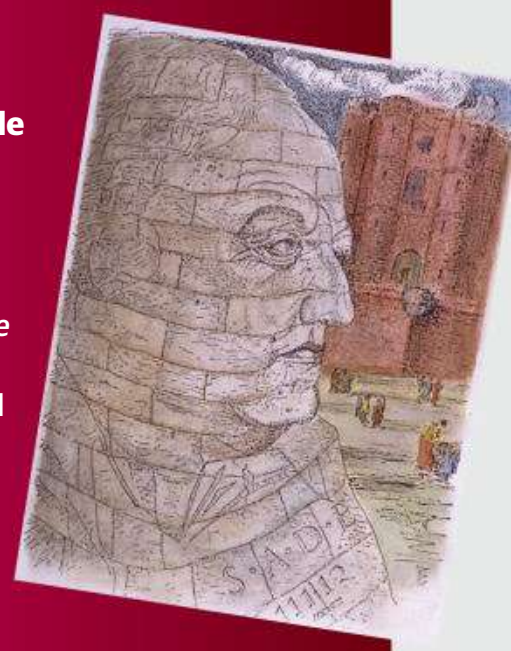
On the night of 3 July 1789 De Sade was dragged from his cell. Earlier that day he had attracted the attention of a crowd outside his window by screaming that prisoners' throats were being cut and howling for assistance. Worried of the possible disruption his behaviour could cause, he was sent to a mental institution. Hidden in the wall of his cell, however, was a copper cylinder that, in the commotion, De Sade was unable to retrieve. When his wife ventured to the prison on the 14th, the day the Bastille was stormed, the cylinder, which contained

The Legacy of De Sade

The man and his works have continued to inspire artists


THE PERSECUTION AND ASSASSINATION OF JEAN-PAUL MARAT AS PERFORMED BY THE INMATES OF THE ASYLUM OF CHARENTON UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE MARQUIS DE SADE
PETER WEISS

Title: **Marat/Sade**
Author: Peter Weiss
This 1964 play features De Sade himself as a character and takes place during his final years in a mental institution. De Sade stages a dramatic reimagining of the assassination of Jean-Paul Marat, a device Weiss uses to discuss ideas of revolution and philosophy. Weiss paints De Sade as an individualist and nihilist. The play was later filmed in 1967 by Peter Brook and features Ian Richardson and Patrick Magee.



Title: **Imaginary Portrait of the Marquis de Sade**
Author: Man Ray
From 1936 onwards the surrealist artist Man Ray produced a series of works known as the 'imaginary series', all meant to be portraits of De Sade. He also created a work known as *Monument à D.A.F. de Sade* after viewing the manuscript of *The 120 Days of Sodom*. This striking work showed a woman's behind framed by an upside down cross and has been used on various paperback covers.

Title: **l'Age D'Or**
Author: Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel
This 1930 surrealist satirical film by Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel has, as its final segment, a sequence which acts as a coda to *The 120 Days of Sodom*, with the four men emerging from their castle. Dali created a number of works based on De Sade's writings.

Title: **Quills**
Author: Doug Wright
This 1995 play was so successful that it won an Obie Award before being adapted for the screen in 2000. Starring Geoffrey Rush as De Sade, Phillip Kaufman's film was nominated for three Oscars, including best actor for Rush. The film has numerous historical inaccuracies, however, due to the filmmaker using De Sade as a vessel through which to discuss philosophical issues.

a long manuscript for an unpublished novel, had vanished. De Sade was apparently so distraught over the loss of this and other manuscripts he said: "Every day I shed tears of blood."

But what exactly were scroll's contents? *The 120 Days of Sodom*, widely regarded as De Sade's most shocking work. Sometime before his wife's arrival, the scroll had been discovered by a young Frenchman named Arnoux de Saint-Maximin. Eventually, a century later, the scroll ended up in the hands of German psychiatrist, and De Sade's first biographer, Iwan Bloch, who published a small run of only 180 copies. Written in 1785 over a period of 37 consecutive days, during which De Sade worked for three hours every evening, only the first section exists in full and the remaining three exist only in rough outlines. The novel tells the story of four libertines who seal themselves away in a castle with a large group of teenage victims, who they abuse, torture and eventually murder. It is perhaps fortunate for De Sade that the France of 1789 never got to experience *The 120 Days of Sodom*. If they had his already scandalous reputation would only have increased tenfold.

In 1790, as the French Revolution entered its most turbulent phase, De Sade found himself released, with all previous scandals and crimes seemingly forgotten. This time, his imprisonment seems to have curtailed his appetites and he appears to have invested most of his energies into his writing. While never quite reaching the depraved heights of *The 120 Days of Sodom*, his works were still shocking enough that they were published under a pseudonym. *Justine, or The Misfortunes of Virtue,* was published in 1791 and was to

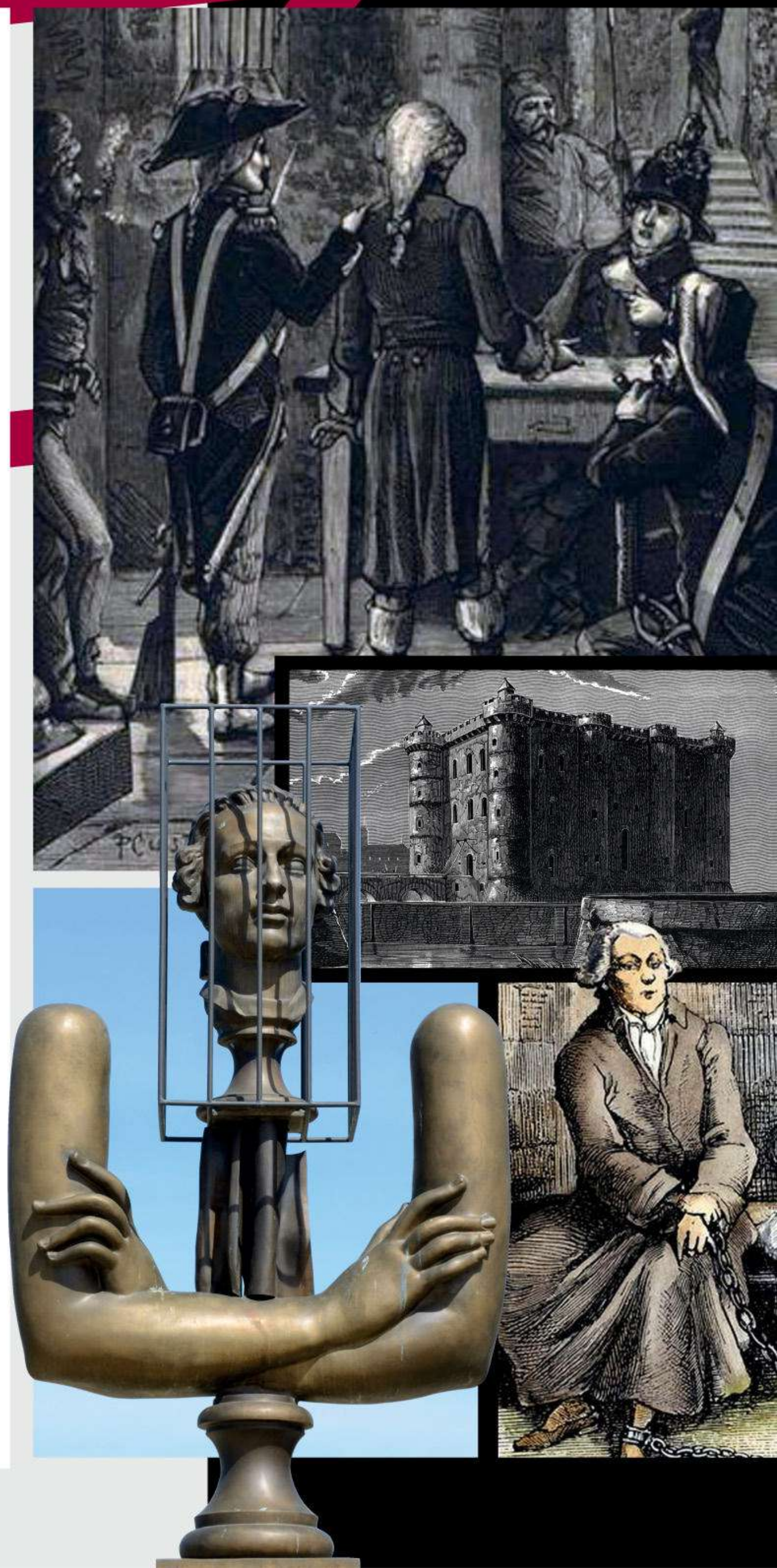
> "*Justine* and *Juliette* were denounced as perverse and pornographic literature"

prove particularly inflammatory. The book is actually one of a pair of novels, *Justine* and *Juliette*, which tell the story of one sister's quest for virtue and the other's quest for vice, showing that the former results in a life of misery while the latter results only in pleasure.

If his literary career continued to scandalise, in his daily life De Sade appears to have been reformed, becoming something of a model citizen. He expressed his energies not in sexual deviancy but through politics. His views were that of the far left and in 1792 he was elected to the National Convention as the representative of the 'Section des Piques'. De Sade authored a number of radical pamphlets and often called for the implementation of a direct vote. His new power allowed him to make sure that the Montreuils were not named as enemies of the revolution and, bizarrely given their history, he chose to save both his mother-in-law and father-in-law.

However, De Sade's aristocratic background left him open to insults and abuse from his fellow revolutionaries, and the desertion of his son from the military did not win him any favours. In 1793 he encouraged the wrath Maximilien Robespierre, the architect of the Reign of Terror, when he criticised both him and the increasingly violent turns the revolution was taking. As a result, De Sade was accused of 'Moderatism' and sentenced to death. He only narrowly escaped Madame Guillotine when Robespierre was overthrown and ended up under her blade himself. Released but financially ruined, De Sade was forced to sell the castle at Lacoste.

Yet he did not escape persecution for long and his earlier writing of both *Justine* and *Juliette* (not to mention the equally



RIGHT An illustration from *La nouvelle Justine* by De Sade

TOP-LEFT An illustration of De Sade being investigated by Parisian policemen

INSET-LEFT The Bastille in Paris, where De Sade was imprisoned. The prison was stormed and destroyed during the French Revolution

BELOW-LEFT A metal sculpture tribute to De Sade by Alexandre Bourganov outside the Chateau Lacoste

BELOW Imprisoned in 1801 on the orders of Napoleon, De Sade ended his days in jail

obscene *Philosophy in the Bedroom*) was about to return to haunt him. Bonaparte had personally taken offence to the books and his minister of police, Joseph Fouché, was seeking to rein in a press that was considered to have too much freedom. *Justine* and *Juliette* were denounced as examples of a perverse and pornographic literature, a fact that was emphasised when, on 18 August 1800, a raid on a book-binding establishment saw the seizure of copies that were being bound with obscene illustrations. The hunt was now on for the anonymous author of the works and it wasn't long before fingers began to be pointed in De Sade's direction. On 22 October the critic Alexandre-Louis de Villeterque wrote a scathing review of De Sade's *Les Crimés de l'Amour* in the *Journal Des Paris*, stating the work was a "detestable book by a man suspected of having written an even more horrible one." The claim was vehemently denied by De Sade himself, who argued: "I have never written such works and I most certainly never will."

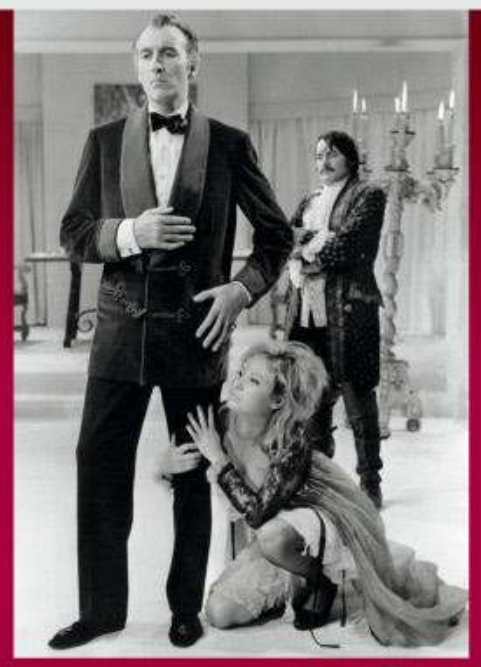
Yet despite his protests the law seems to have made up its mind about De Sade and in 1801, by order of Bonaparte himself, he was arrested and sent to Charenton mental institution. There, he was briefly able to stage productions for the public, using his various fellow inmates as the cast thanks to the help of the asylum's director François Simonet de Coulmier. Possibly De Sade hoped that he would one day achieve freedom and stage professional productions, but it was not to be. In 1814, he passed away at the age of 74. Upon inheriting all of his manuscripts, his son, ashamed of his father's legacy, gave instructions that all were to be burnt. *The 120 Days of Sodom* may have escaped the storming of the Bastille, but many of De Sade's later works, including the multi-volume *Les Journées de Florbelle*, were not so fortunate.

In the years following his death De Sade's legend and notoriety seemed to grow, and he became an almost bogeyman-type figure whose wickedness ensured him a place among the great villains of history. It will come as no surprise that his name gave birth to the word 'sadism', defined by the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary as: "The derivation of sexual gratification from the infliction of physical pain or humiliation on another person." Then, during the 20th century De Sade was recast as something of a revolutionary hero. Scholars, historians and artists began to reassess him in a movement that the author and historian Simon Baker states, "can be summed up by Paul Eluard's 1926 essay title: *D.A.F. de Sade, fantastic and revolutionary writer*."

Academics continue to celebrate the work of De Sade, while much fiction continues to cast him as a villain, and he himself remains a divisive figure. De Sade was a man who personally committed a number of shocking crimes for which he was rightfully punished. His greatest legacy is arguably not the works he created, and certainly not the man himself, but the artists he inspired and the legend of creative freedom which surrounds him.

"Everybody took their clothes off!"

When Christopher Lee took a role in 1970's *Eugenie De Sade*, he had little idea what kind of film he was making...



In the 1960s the Marquis de Sade was a subject deemed worthy for the big screen, with films such as Cy Endfield's 1969 biopic *De Sade* attracting much publicity. Other directors, however, while still creating surreal arthouse masterpieces, were slightly more salacious in how they approached the subject. One such artist was Jess Franco, a Spanish filmmaker described by biographer Stephen Thrower as "a dedicated exponent of weird sex."

Franco directed more than 180 movies across a 54-year period and is known for his weird visuals and risqué content. It's no surprise, then, that Franco found himself attracted to the work of De Sade, with perhaps two of his best known films being *Marquis De Sade: Justine* (1968) and *Eugenie De Sade* (1970).

The latter film, an adaptation of the 1795 novel *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, stars Christopher Lee as the character Dolmancé. At the time, Lee was known for his horror roles but had an established relationship with producer Harry Alan Towers, playing Fu Manchu in five pulp pot-boilers. George Sanders was originally cast as Dolmancé but when he withdrew, Lee took the role as a favour.

It goes without saying that the film is explicit but supposedly Lee was unaware of this fact and claimed to have recorded his scenes with most of the actors surrounding him fully clothed. In an interview Lee revealed: "A friend of mine said: 'You're in a cinema on Old Compton Street,'" which was an area of Soho, London, notorious for cinemas showing pornographic content. Deciding he needed to investigate the matter, Lee discovered that: "After I left [the film set] they reshot my point of view and everybody took their clothes off."

What Happened Next?

How the amazing lives of the Apostles carried them into history, legend and distant lands

Written by Ben Gazur

It was a dark night for the disciples of Jesus. The man they believed to be the Messiah had just died the brutal and humiliating death of a criminal on a cross. One question faced them: what would they do now?

If the story of Jesus and his disciples ended with them retiring to quiet lives we might only know of Jesus as just another of the religious prophets of the 1st century whose cults went nowhere. Instead, improbably, miraculously, this band of Apostles helped spread a religious movement that has shaped history and is today followed by around 2.6 billion people. To make sense of how Christianity got here we must look at the extraordinary lives of those who knew Jesus in the flesh.

Where did Jesus die?

Most historians are satisfied that Jesus was a real historical figure that lived, preached and died in the early decades of the 1st century. The *Gospels* of the *New Testament* give us the fullest picture of Jesus' ministry, but these were written decades after his death. There are no contemporaneous documents that attest to his existence, but then this is true of most people who lived during that period.

The earliest texts that mention Jesus are most likely the *Pauline Epistles* of the *New Testament*. These letters may have been written as early as the 50s CE. *1 Corinthians*, written by St Paul, already mentions "Christ crucified". Since the idea of the son of God being put to death is described by Paul as a "stumbling block" in getting people to follow Jesus it is unlikely that his followers would invent the fact of his crucifixion. Because of this we can say with some certainty that Jesus was indeed put to death on a cross in Jerusalem.

Who were the Apostles?

The *Gospels* of the *New Testament* and the *Acts* of the Apostles describe a core of 12 followers of Jesus that were closest to him. These are the men most commonly called Apostles, though the term is occasionally applied to others in the *Bible*. The word derives from Greek, meaning "one who is sent off".

Discussing the Apostles, however, brings up the issue of who exactly they were. The *Gospels* give differing lists of the 12 Apostles. All four agree that Simon, Peter, Andrew, James son of

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Zebedee, John, Philip, Thomas and Judas Iscariot were among the disciples. The *Gospel of John* differs from the other three gospels, however, by either not mentioning several of the Apostles or using different names. Most Christian sects have reconciled the differences between the lists by saying different names were used for the same person.

In the *Gospel of Matthew* it says that after a night of prayer "Jesus summoned his 12 disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness." These were activities that would require the physical presence of the Apostles. In the *Gospel of Mark* Jesus sends the Apostles out in pairs, telling them: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt." The Apostles were to lead a peripatetic existence both while with Jesus and after his death.

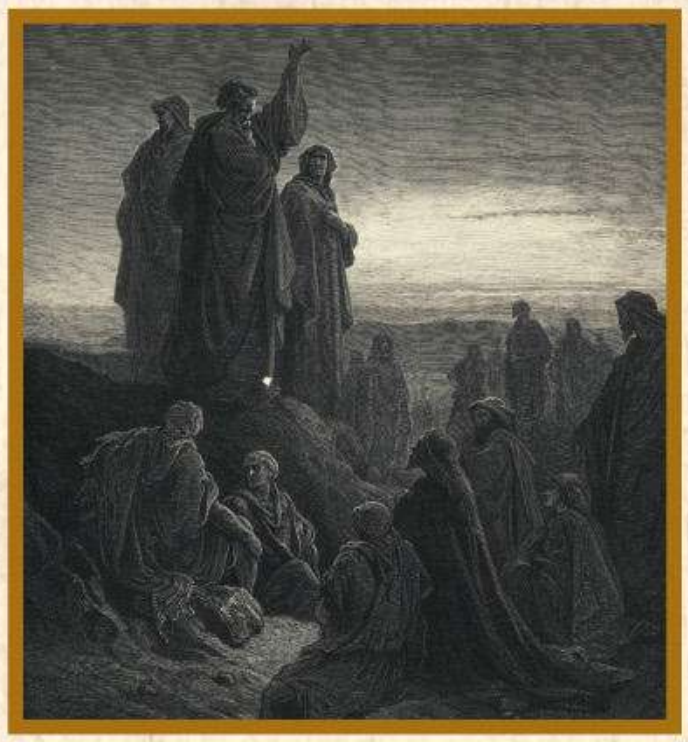
As W Brian Shelton, professor of theology and author of *Quest for the Historical Apostles: Tracing Their Lives and Legacies* (Baker Academic, 2019) tells us, they were set on their various paths by Jesus himself. In *Matthew 28:19-20* Jesus commands the Apostles to "make disciples of all nations". Shelton states: "The journeys of the Apostles after the *Book of Acts* are significant because they represent the impetus of the Apostles and a global expansion of the church."

After the end

In the *New Testament* the crucifixion is not the end of Jesus' story – his resurrection is the most important 'fact' in Christian faith. Unfortunately, miraculous events fall outside of the historian's remit. All that can be said is that early Christians believed Jesus had triumphed over death. St Paul referenced the resurrection in his letters, as do the Gospels.

One of the first things Jesus is said to have done after his return was to show himself to his followers in Jerusalem. According to the *Book of Acts*, which records the actions of the disciples, Jesus remained with his followers for 40 days before ascending into heaven. It is then left to Peter to pick a replacement Apostle in place of the treacherous Judas.

Though the death of the charismatic leader usually leads to the decline of a religious movement the Apostles believed they had been given proof that he really was the son of God. "These disciples of Jesus had walked with the Messiah, witnessed his miracles and resurrection, gained inspiration from his teaching and found transformation in their own lives," says Shelton.



TOP St Peter is thought to have been crucified upside down

ABOVE The Apostles continued to preach the teachings of Jesus after his death, spreading Christianity

They were given further proof when, during Pentecost, it is said that tongues of fire descended on them and they were given the power to speak all the languages. This would supposedly prove useful in their later travels, though we are told some people at the time were unimpressed with this new linguistic ability. They scoffed at the disciples and said: "They've had too much wine."

> "The Apostles were to lead a peripatetic existence both while with Jesus and after his death"

The *Book of Acts* is a fascinating document that reveals much about the lives of the early Christians. We are told that they met together for prayer, broke bread together and lived together. Those who followed the Apostles are said to have sold their property and laid their money at the feet of their leaders so that all things could be shared among them. Unfortunately, the early Christians and the Apostles would not be able to stay in Jerusalem forever.

Persecution and dispersal

Jesus had been put to death for causing trouble for both the Jewish and Roman authorities, and a group of people hoping to further his message was unlikely to be looked on favourably. We are told of several Apostles being arrested, but the harassment of the early Christians did not stop there.

The first of the Apostles to die, other than Judas, was Stephen. Dragged before the Sanhedrin he was sentenced to death and stoned. One of those watching his execution was Saul, who would later become St Paul after his conversion on the road to Damascus. The *Book of Acts* describes how a great persecution then erupted. King Herod had Peter arrested and put in jail, and only the intervention of an angel freed him. Peter, it is said, "departed and went to another place." He had good reason to make himself scarce since martyrdom was not yet a clear-cut method of becoming a saint.

While those who left Jerusalem spread the word of Jesus, the Apostles who remained still had to decide exactly what that word was. Some felt that converts to Christianity first had to become Jewish, but Paul seems to have not required this. The first controversy of the church that was settled by a council involved several of the Apostles meeting in Jerusalem to decide if converted followers of Jesus had to be circumcised. This matter was important because the Apostles had begun to win converts in non-Jewish areas. The settling of the matter also reveals much about the structure of the early church. The Apostles voice their opinions in turn and a letter was sent to the Christians in Antioch who had first raised the matter. Letters and council decisions would long play a role in administering the church.

Last to speak in this first council was James the Just, also known as the brother of Jesus. According to the historian

Jesus' inner circle

The Apostles thought to be closest to Christ

Simon

Later known as St Peter, Simon was considered by early Christians to be the leader of the 12 disciples of Jesus. He is considered to be the first pope by the Roman Catholic Church and died in Rome around 64 CE.

Andrew

Brother of Simon (St Peter), the pair were said to have been fishermen before joining Jesus. The exact year of his death is unclear, but it is thought to have been between 60 and 70 CE and that he was crucified on an X-shaped cross.

James

One of the two sons of Zebedee, James was among the first four disciples along with Simon, Andrew and John. He was beheaded by King Herod around 44 CE and his remains are said to have been moved to a shrine in Spain.

John

Brother of James, John is believed to have been influential in setting up the church in Jerusalem. He was likely the youngest of the Apostles and is credited with being the author of the *Gospel of John* in the *New Testament*.

8x © Getty Images

Eusebius, James was the first bishop to be appointed over the church in Jerusalem. That he is said to have remained in this position for 30 years shows how important the Apostles' direct connection to Jesus was to their authority.

Whither goest thou?

The *Book of Acts* was probably written after 90 CE and by the same author as the *Gospel of Luke*. The relatively early date of authorship makes it a valuable source as it is entirely possible that the author knew some of the Apostles, or knew people who had known them. Other texts are more problematic as they were sometimes written centuries later.

Shelton describes the sources for the later actions of the Apostles: "The historical accounts of the Apostles after the *New Testament* are primarily contained in a genre of literature known as the *Apostolic Acts*. These works are marked by fantastical stories, speeches and theological teaching contrary to the *New Testament*, and a worldview known as gnosticism." There are other sources that can be used in piecing together their lives: "Their historical accounts are also contained in sermons, commentary writings and histories by church fathers, often without historical substantiation and sometimes with minor elements of contradiction to other sources."

Some of the later *Apostolic Acts* contain tales that may not be literally true but would've helped to spread the faith of Christianity by entertaining and educating at the same time. "[One tale] that often gives an audience a good laugh is the episode of Paul encountering a lion in the wilderness of Palestine in the *Acts of Paul*," says Shelton. "The lion talks, inquires about the faith, becomes a disciple and seems to have even been baptised by Paul. When the Apostle is later thrown to the lions at Ephesus, a reunion takes place that day rather than a martyrdom."

Peter, always listed first among the Apostles, seems to have been the first to found a church outside of Jerusalem. Tradition has it that he was the first Patriarch of the church in Antioch, today located in southern Turkey. He may also have created a Christian community at Corinth. Yet it is Rome that is most associated with St Peter. The pope claims direct apostolic succession from Peter as the Bishop of Rome. The writings of Paul do not mention Peter in Rome even when discussing the church there, nor does the *Book of Acts*. Tradition, however, has long placed him there and many sites in the city are claimed to be linked to him.

The Apostle John was recorded as remaining mostly in Judaea and aiding in the conversion of people to Christianity. Later traditions give him adventures of his own. Tertullian, writing in the late 2nd century, says John was persecuted and plunged into boiling oil. Luckily the Apostle emerged unscathed and was then exiled to the isle of Patmos off the Turkish coast. Tradition has John living a long life – perhaps until as late as 98 CE.

While it was inside the Roman Empire that the Christian message found its first converts, tales have long been told of the Apostles travelling much further afield. One text describes how Matthew travelled to Ethiopia to spread the word of Jesus – he eventually converted the royal family of Ethiopia. Though the sources for this mission are much later there is indeed an ancient Christian community that exists there.

Other apocryphal gospels, however, place Matthew as performing his ministry elsewhere. "The *Acts of Matthew* accounts how two magicians conjured a dragon to charge the Apostle, which he rebukes and turns against the magicians," Shelton explains. Other, less fabulous, sources do however say that Matthew met his end in Parthia.

The Apostle Thomas is supposed to have journeyed furthest in his preaching – a 3rd century work tells of how he was told by Jesus to go to India. When Thomas, not for the first time, expressed doubts, Jesus is said to have sold him as a slave to a trader heading to India. In India the Apostle undergoes various adventures before serving a local king called Gondophares.

Female disciples

The women who bankrolled the Apostles

In recent years there has been a great deal of effort put into reevaluating the role of women in Jesus' life, trying to find the historical facts that might give us a fuller picture of the real figure. Historians Joan Taylor and Helen Bond, for instance, uncovered a trail of information regarding three women that put them in a new context. Mary Magdalene was not a prostitute, as popular understanding might still believe, but a noblewoman who helped to fund the disciples and their mission. Joanna is also identified as a follower of Jesus who had been married to a leading political figure and added her wealth to the mission too. Finally, there was Salome, a practising healer, whose skills are praised in her tomb. More research and analysis continues to bring more depth to these biblical women, often sidelined by history.

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BELOW A fresco of the 12 Apostles from the Church of Saint Dalmatius in Turin, Italy

ABOVE-LEFT Saints Bartholomew and Thomas shown together, still barefoot and preaching

LEFT *The Incredulity Of Saint Thomas* by Caravaggio shows Thomas investigating the wounds on Jesus' body after his resurrection

An Apostle reaching India may seem dubious, but Shelton points out: "The Thomas journey has strong historical support. Throughout church history, new missionaries to India often landed to discover an established church there which linked itself to the ministry of Thomas in the first century. That pride extends even to today, where Indian Christians carry the name 'Thomas Christians'. A strong oral tradition, legends, hymns, poetry and histories still circulated today perpetuate the tradition that Thomas came to India. Both the cities of Mylapore and Andrapolis have sites that lay claim to his martyrdom there."

There's also a tradition that the Apostle Bartholomew visited India, but most scholars reject this. But there is a strong link between Bartholomew and Armenia, where he is said to have converted the king to Christianity. It was also there that he met a particularly gruesome death – a fate that awaited many of the Apostles.

How did the Apostles die?

Images of Bartholomew can be found in churches across the world, though at first people can find them hard to interpret. He is often shown carrying something that looks like a melting wax figurine. Closer examination reveals that he is actually holding his own flayed skin. Tradition has it that he was skinned alive and beheaded for his conversion of king Polymius. If tradition is to be believed, Bartholomew's fate was not so unusual. Of the 12 Apostles, including Matthias who replaced Judas, 11 are said to have died for their faith.

> "New missionaries to India discovered an established church there which linked itself to the ministry of Thomas in the first century"

St Peter was supposedly crucified upside down in Rome after declaring he was unfit to die in the same way as Jesus. Simon the Zealot is said by some texts to have been sawn in half in Persia, and a 3rd century text says Andrew was scourged and crucified. Hardly any of the records of the deaths of the Apostles would pass historical scrutiny judging by modern standards of scholarship, but the stories associated with the end of their lives were massively influential for centuries in Christianity.

It is perhaps fitting for people who preached about life after death that many of the Apostles enjoyed colourful afterlives. Their bodies became important relics and sites of pilgrimage. In one legend Regulus, bishop of Patras in Greece, was visited by an angel in 345 CE and told to move the bones of St Andrew as far as he could from their resting place. He packed them up and took them all the way to Scotland, to the city now known as St Andrews.

The bones of St James, that became the basis of the great pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, were supposedly discovered by a holy hermit called Pelagius in 814 CE. Strange lights in the sky led him to the tomb – quite how the Apostle came to be buried in Spain was not recorded.

It is likely that we will never know whether these relics are authentic, but in many ways it does not matter as the story of how they came to be revered and the centuries of devotion that have been paid to them is of interest in itself.

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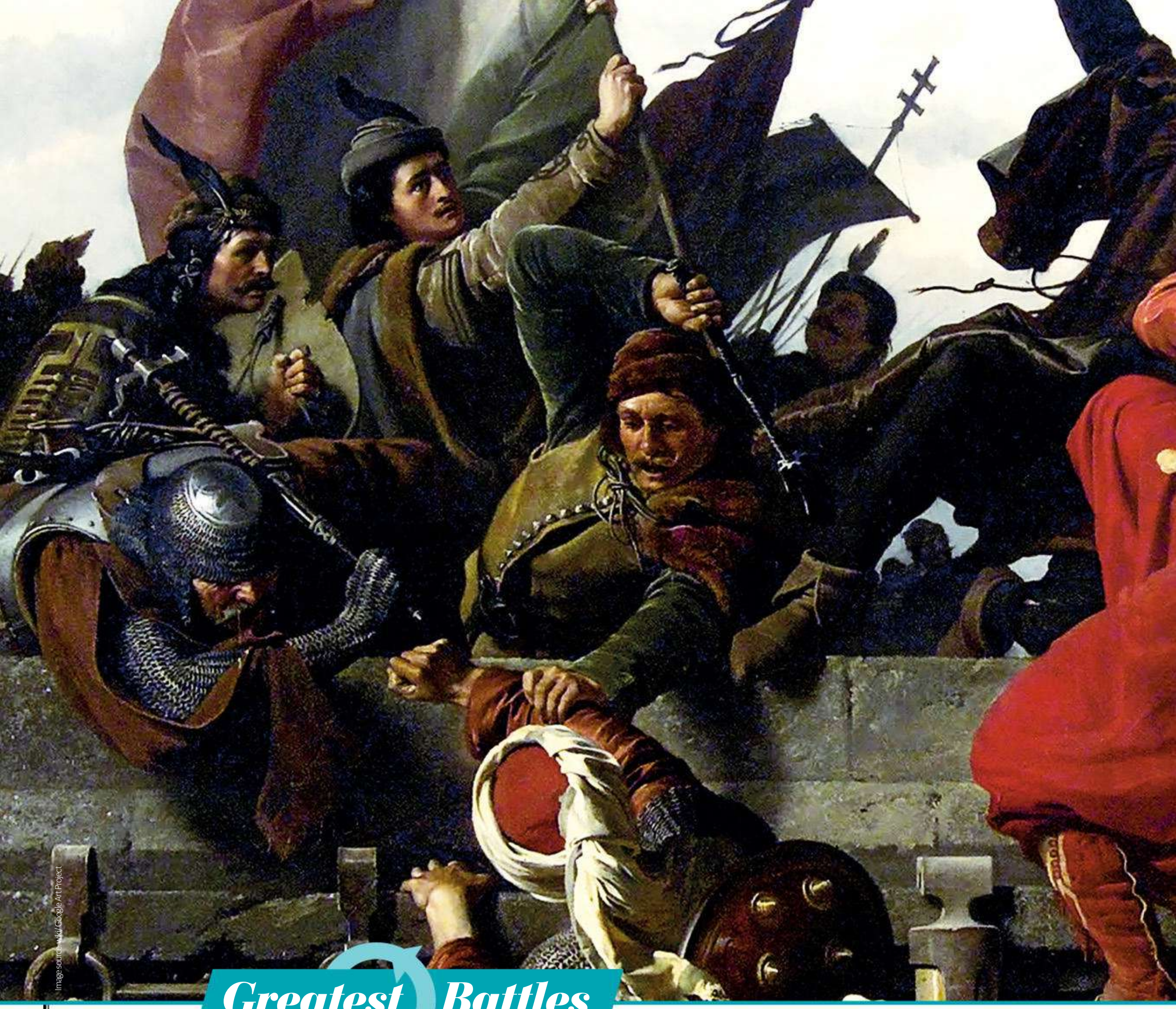


Image source: wiki/Google Art Project

Greatest Battles

SIEGE OF BELGRADE

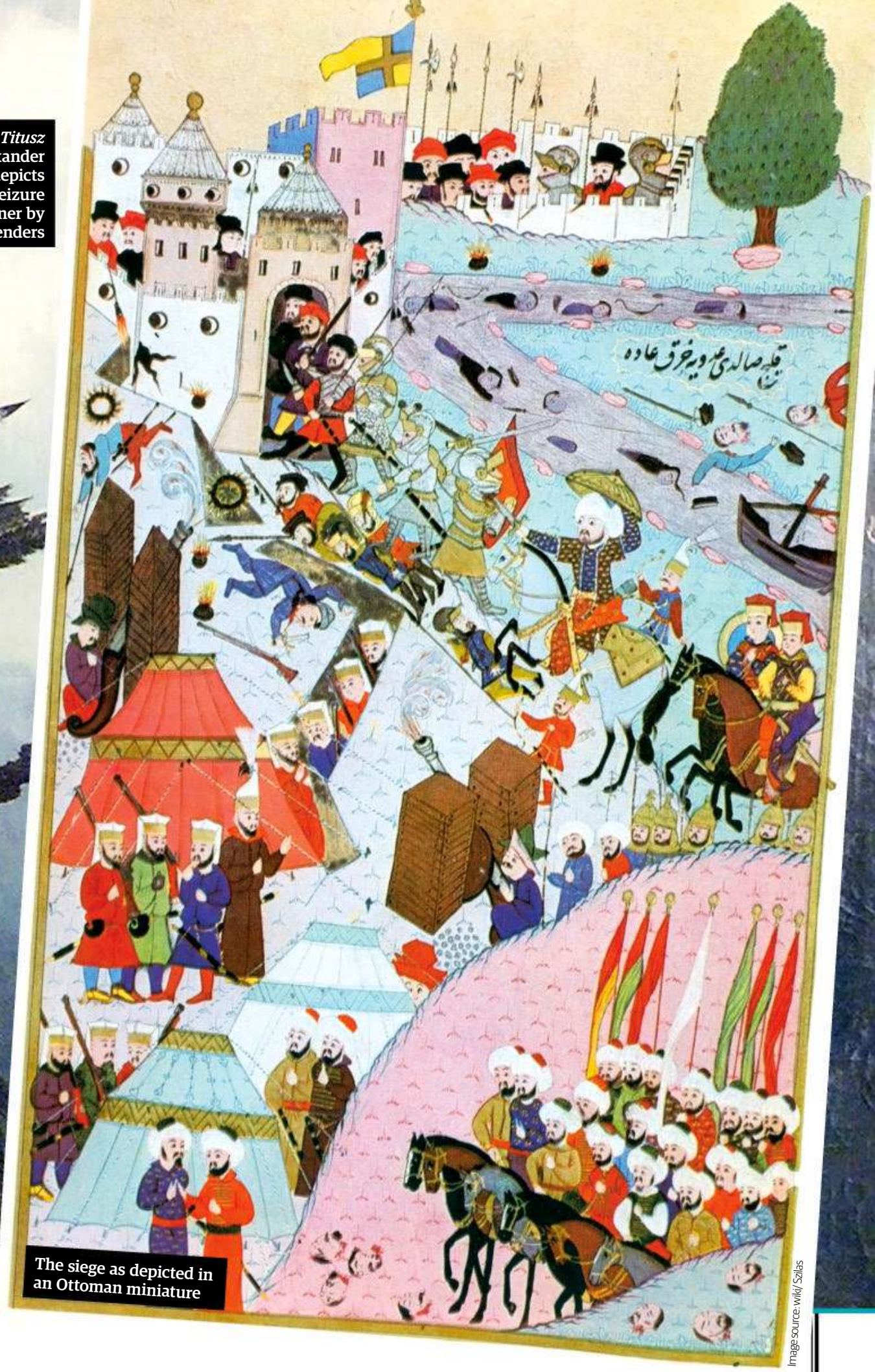
BELGRADE, SERBIA, 4-22 JULY 1456

Written by Aleksandar Pavlovic

Belgrade's fall to the Turks in the late-Medieval period was a question of when, not if. The Ottoman victories against the Serbs in the battles of Maritza in 1371, Kosovo in 1389 and in the remaining Serbian lands in 1439 established them as the dominant force in most of the Balkan Peninsula. They controlled vast territory south of the Danube, and regularly crossed the river and plundered the Kingdom of Hungary. These pillages provided a rich harvest. Contemporary Turkish writer Asıkpasazade relates that a female slave could be bought for a pair of boots, and boasts that he, although poor, "bought a beautiful young boy for 100 akçe", which was a very low value of small silver coins.

Belgrade city and fortress was the last Christian bastion defying the Turks on the Danube's right

The Self-Sacrifice Of Titusz Dugovics by Alexander von Wagner, 1859, depicts the apocryphal seizure of the Ottoman banner by one of Belgrade's defenders



The siege as depicted in an Ottoman miniature

Image source: wiki/ Szlas

bank. In 1440, it successfully resisted the siege launched by the Sultan Murad II. Even though he besieged the city for months, the sultan had to retreat with his tail between his legs. But everyone knew that this victory was only a temporary one, and in 1456 the Turks came back with a vengeance. This time they were led by Murad II's son, Mehmed II, rightfully called the Conqueror. Only three years earlier, the then 21-year-old besieged and captured Constantinople, effectively putting an end to the Eastern Roman Empire. After massive preparations, Mehmed II came beneath the city walls leading a convoy consisting of the janissaries, sipahis (Muslim nobles), Christian vassals, companies of fighters from Persia and Egypt, Tatars, Turkmen, and more. The troops were followed by horses, mules, oxen and camels carrying small boats for the siege from the river, besieging cannons and other devices for destroying the city walls. To eye-witnesses, who described the site of the army gathered beneath Belgrade walls as like "earth covered by clouds", Mehmed II appeared invincible; he could rely on resources from a vast, centralised empire and he was eager to avenge his father by capturing Belgrade.

Local Christians, mainly Hungarians and Serbs, pinned their hopes to John (Janos) Hunyadi, the most influential Hungarian noble in the southern lands and the fiercest enemy of the Turks. In the 1440s and early 1450s, he had launched repeated surprise attacks on the Turks throughout Serbia and Wallachia, and occasionally even defeated them on the open field. This earned him respect, popularity and the fame. Songs celebrating his deeds were already circulating during his lifetime, and he has remained the great hero of the pan-Balkan epic ever since, called variably Sibinjanin Janko in Serbian epic poetry, Ion of Hunedoara by the Romanians, Jansekula by the Bulgarians and Macedonians, and Ugrin Janko by other Slavs. The Greeks appropriated him under the name of Janko of Byzantium, and his contemporary, Byzantine historian Dukas, compared him to the Ancient Greek heroes Achilles and Hector. Nevertheless, the bravery of a single leader and a handful of nobles could only have limited impact. After Christian defeats in the 1444 Battle of Varna and 1448 Battle of Kosovo, it was clear only a vast coalition of Christian forces could be a match for the Ottoman Empire. However, even in the face of this constant and imminent

threat, Christian nobility remained disunited and immersed in petty disputes.

In times of conflict, words can sometimes be more effective than swords, and Pope Callixtus III knew that well. He dispatched his cardinal, Juan Carvajal, known as 'a Peter in spirit, a Caesar in courage', on a vast diplomatic mission with the aim of inspiring a Crusade. Before settling at the Hungarian court, Carvajal visited Venice and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, and sought help from Sigismund of Austria, the duke of Milan, the king of Aragon, the duke of Burgundy, the Albanian leader Skanderbeg and assorted German nobles.

Equally important were the efforts of a Franciscan friar, John of Capistrano. The 70-year-old was a brilliant preacher whose fiery speeches in favour of a Crusade against the Turks attracted masses of commoners such as students, craftsmen, the unemployed, monks, even Orthodox Christians and Jews (remarkable given his role in inspiring pogroms). His rousing oratory effectively made him the leader of the 'holy war'. For instance, upon hearing news of his impending arrival, so many people gathered in Apatin (in the modern Serbian province of Vojvodina) that its archbishop wrote a desperate plea to Capistrano to come as soon as possible as there was a risk of famine.

These Christian masses eventually gathered in Zemun, on the bank of the Danube, just a mile or so upstream from Belgrade. Yet despite their numbers, their role in the siege was modest at best. Not only were they poorly equipped and inexperienced, but Belgrade defenders could only accommodate a limited number of fighters within the city's gates. Even if we accept the unreliable figures of 50,000 Crusaders, probably no more than 10,000 people actually took part in the battle both within and outside the city walls. Correspondingly, even though the pope and Carvajal managed to gather a sizeable papal fleet and dispatch it to Turkish waters, their efforts remained fruitless for the most part. The vast majority of the Hungarian nobles stayed at home, uninterested in the conflict. What is more, the king himself left Buda for Vienna, leaving their border and its defenders to their own fate. In the days before the siege started, Carvajal wrote to Capistrano describing his disappointment: "I have said and proposed many things, but to no effect." It was the co-operation between Hunyadi, Carvajal and Capistrano that would decide the outcome of the battle.

John of Capistrano leads the Christian forces in the siege of Belgrade

Image source: wiki/ Creert

John Hunyadi depicted in a hand-coloured woodcut from Johannes de Thurocz's 15th-century *Chronica Hungarorum* (*Hungarian Chronicle*)

Image source: wiki/ Chronica Hungarorum

With the arrival of the first Ottoman units, who plundered the region in June, Belgrade was besieged from all sides except from the river. Capistrano arrived with the first Crusaders on 2 July, at the same time as Mehmed II, while Hunyadi arrived a week or so later. As it appears, it took him more time to gather troops and prepare ships and vessels for the battle on the Danube. For ten days straight, Turkish cannons bombarded the city, causing considerable damage, especially to the outer walls and the Lower City. Signs of destruction were everywhere and the defenders were desperate, while the besieging Turks were gradually filling in the ditch beneath the city walls with wood, stone and other material in preparation for the janissaries' final assault.

Turkish ships surrounded Belgrade. They were tied together with a chain just above the confluence of the Danube with the Sava River to blockade any fresh supplies and reinforcements for the defenders. Here it appears the young sultan made a gross error of judgement. He rejected the proposal of his right-hand man Karadza, one of his army commanders, to cross the river and occupy Zemun in order to prevent the arrival of the Hungarian army from that side. It seems that the sultan had full confidence in his fleet, which would prove to be fatal.

Hunyadi finally arrived leading a fleet, and on 14 July focused all his efforts on breaking the river blockade. Using the power of the Danube's current, Hunyadi's flotilla successfully broke the chains and engaged in close combat with the Turkish ships. His experienced men, Serbian and Hungarian šajkaši (river flotilla troops), used small vessels and knew the area well. Their skill and knowledge of the Danube enabled them to manoeuvre with greater ease than their Turkish counterparts. According to a prearranged plan, once they broke the blockade the vessels from the Belgrade fortress attacked the Turks from the rear and caused considerable damage. This breakage of the river blockade proved decisive. Thousands of men came to aid the defenders, bringing arms, cannons, guns and gunpowder, as well as much-needed food. "Food was as abundant as the rain," wrote one witness. Morale was also raised when Hunyadi came with the captured Turkish flags and raised them proudly on the city walls.

During the next seven days the Turks continued with the siege, their bombardments becoming increasingly ferocious as they prepared for the final attack. Finally, as the sun set on 21 July, the sultan ordered a general assault, led by his janissaries. "As lions against their prey, they rushed to the enemy," one source wrote. The defenders fought vigorously, but the already-filled ditch and half-broken walls and towers of the Lower City proved an insufficient obstacle. A critical moment came when around 600 to 700 janissaries entered the Lower City and rushed to the bridge leading to the Upper City. Even Belgrade commander Michael Szilagyi was said to believe that the battle was lost, and used a secret passage to reach a prearranged ship that would take him across the river to safety. But Hunyadi had a plan. He allowed these first enemy troops to enter the city walls then ordered wood, cloth and

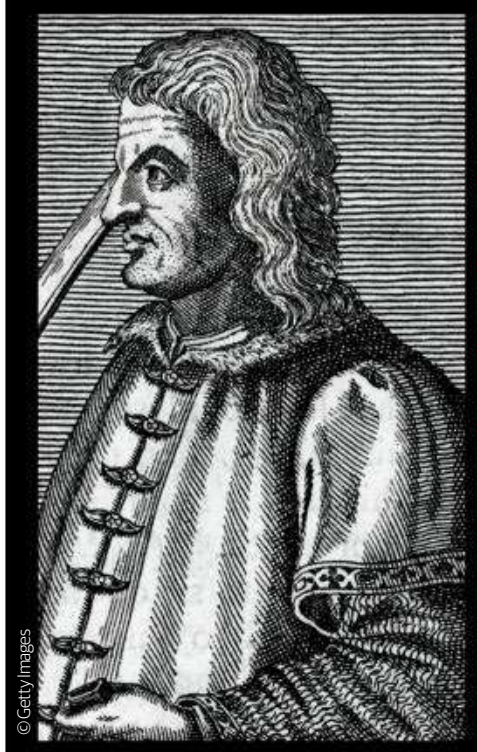
other flammable material, all soaked in sulphite and gun powder, to be hurled into the ditch. In the hot July weather, the ensuing inferno killed all those trapped in the middle of the ditch and prevented other Turks from entering the city. The janissaries who remained within the city walls were slaughtered by the overwhelming number of defenders. Hunyadi's clever ploy proved decisive.

The new dawn revealed a terrifying picture. Dead, wounded and burned Turks were everywhere; the streets were filled with corpses and women were walking over them collecting arrows, wood and other useful material for when the fighting resumed. But there was no need – the Turks had lost their stomach for the fight. It seemed that during the night, the sultan himself had taken part in the fighting in a desperate bid to stop the retreat and organise a counterattack, and he had been wounded. At dawn, the sultan decided to leave and ordered the remaining ships to be burned. Huge losses in men, especially janissaries, as well as the death of several commanders and distinguished Turks, had left him with no choice but to retreat. Some accounts of the defeat even

This painting shows John of Capistrano preaching against frivolity, c.1465-75

Image source: wiki/Historisches Museum Bamberg

KINGDOM OF HUNGARY



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JOHN HUNYADI

A political and military leader from Hungary, Hunyadi's influence was strong around central and south-eastern Europe, cutting his teeth against the Ottoman Empire on the southern border of the Kingdom of Hungary. His victory at Belgrade against Mehmed II cemented his reputation.

© Getty Images

JOHN OF CAPISTRANO

This Franciscan friar and Catholic priest was originally from Italy and earned the nickname "the Soldier Saint" when he took up arms against the Ottoman Empire at the age of 70 to lead a new Crusade at Belgrade. Despite also being known for his anti-semitic rhetoric, he was canonised in the late 17th century.

© Alamy

MICHAEL SZILÁGYI

Szilágyi started out working for his brother-in-law as vice ispán of Torontál County. He was the captain of the Belgrade fortress during the siege and in later years became Ban of Mascó, becoming a baron. He also served as regent for the Kingdom of Hungary as Hunyadi's son Matthias was elected king.

OTTOMAN EMPIRE

© Getty Images

MEHMED II

While he more than earned his foreboding moniker of Mehmed the Conqueror, Belgrade proved a city too far for the Ottoman sultan. He had defeated Hunyadi during his first reign and Belgrade would eventually be taken by the Ottomans in 1521 under the leadership of Suleiman I, Mehmed II's great-grandson.

Image source: wiki/wangfolyo.blogspot.hu

ZAGAN PASHA

An Albanian military commander and grand vizier, Pasha was originally a Christian and converted to Islam. He was one of Mehmed II's top advisors and he took most of the blame after the failure at Belgrade. He regained his reputation as the head of the navy, becoming the governor of Thessaly and Macedonia.

claim that the sultan was seriously wounded and lay unconscious for days, and that upon waking up he was so dismayed that his assistants had to use force to prevent him from committing suicide. Even if these stories are exaggerated, the whole disastrous campaign was certainly an embarrassment for Mehmed II. He was indeed a conqueror who had taken Constantinople, but Belgrade's city walls had scuppered his attempts at further conquest, just as they had done to his father a generation before.

Immediately after the Turkish attack had been resisted, the Christians showed their antagonism. Hunyadi anticipated that naïve Crusaders would want to rush out from the walls to fight the Turks, and he gave strict orders to avoid any further bloodshed. But the Crusaders did not care about his or Szilagyi's orders, nor did they listen to Capistrano at that point. Hungry and inexperienced, they wanted to capitalise on this victory and capture the rich prey waiting for them in the Turkish tents. The Turks left the first groups of men well alone, but once others approached in greater numbers they unleashed their cavalry and devastated the Crusaders. "Not even one in 100 men managed to escape," claimed one eye-witness. In the weeks that followed, Capistrano proclaimed the end of the Crusade and eventually persuaded the remaining men, both those in Belgrade and in Zemun, to return home. For the many who died, in battle or from famine and disease, it was too late. The two companions, Hunyadi and Capistrano, also suffered. Hunyadi died from the plague only two weeks after the Turkish retreat, while Capistrano outlived him for just two months. They had managed to defeat the Turks on the battlefield, but in doing so they had both succumbed to the black death.

After their deaths, no other noble or Christian dignitary showed such energy and skill in promoting Christian unity and opposing the Turks. Even if Belgrade resisted the siege this time, it was still doomed to fall. The events that followed, such as the ultimate demise of the Serbian state in 1460s and the eventual fall of Belgrade in 1521, were a consequence of the same disunity and lack of common goal and dedication as before. This Pyrrhic victory at the Siege of Belgrade failed to resolve the antagonisms that made both Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians in the Balkans and Central Europe easy prey for the Ottomans for centuries. The Turks continued with their gradual expansion for 200 years after their defeat in 1456.

Altogether, the story of the Siege of Belgrade is a chivalrous narrative about a rare occasion when the Christian nobility were able to put aside their mutual hostilities in the name of the greater good. Perhaps historians are ultimately right in saying that the defenders of Belgrade were only postponing the inevitable; but for the Ancient Greeks, who invented Greek tragedy, it was precisely such human action in the face of inevitable fate that constituted the true essence and greatness of mankind.

01 Rumeli troops

The units of the Rumeli commander Karadza were situated along the Danube embankment. Rumeli – meaning Roman, from the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire – referred to men recruited from Ottoman territory in Europe.

02 Siege cannons

The biggest cannons were placed on three sides from the land, targeting the strategically most important parts of the city, while smaller cannons of various sizes were placed between them. All cannons were dug in and each had a rampart to protect both the gun and its crew.

03 Hungarian defenders

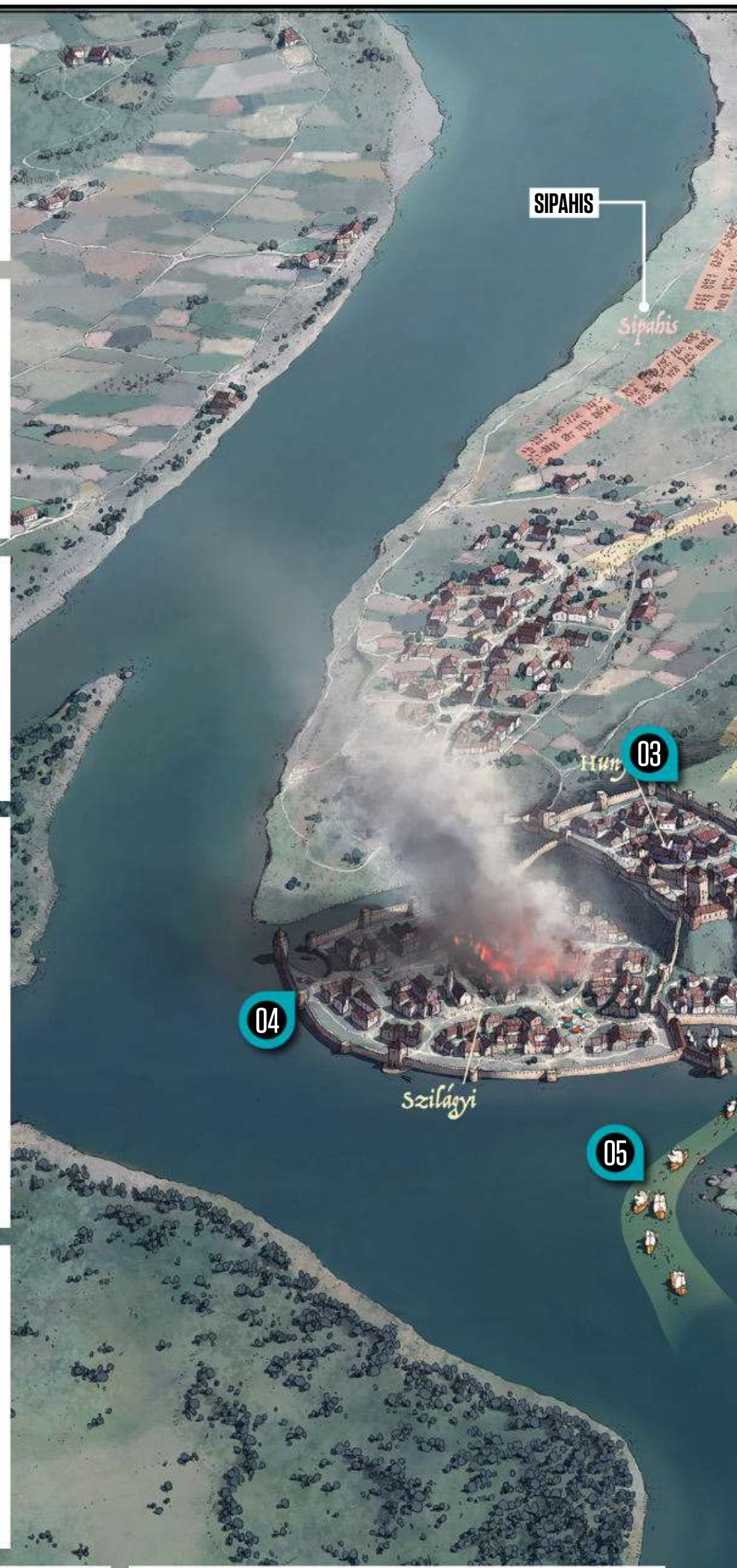
When it comes to many medieval events, the figures provided can be unreliable, but it's believed that Hunyadi had at his disposal some 6,000 defenders at the beginning of the siege. They were joined by up to 10,000 Crusaders.

04 Belgrade

The Belgrade fortress consisted of a wider, less fortified Lower City, which suffered the most from enemy bombardment and thus enabled the janissaries to penetrate its damaged walls, and the Upper City, heavily fortified and on the higher ground. The Upper City suffered less damage during the weeks of bombardment and remained impenetrable throughout the siege. Michael Szilagyi, the commander of Belgrade, was situated in the Upper City, but Hunyadi was the overall leader.

05 John Hunyadi

Hunyadi himself was rarely in the fortress, in part because of antagonism between the Hungarian army and the Crusaders, and his fear – not unfounded – that he might not be safe among the Crusaders. He arrived from the river, broke the blockade and then for the most part remained close to the city, on a ship or across the river, overseeing events and issuing orders.



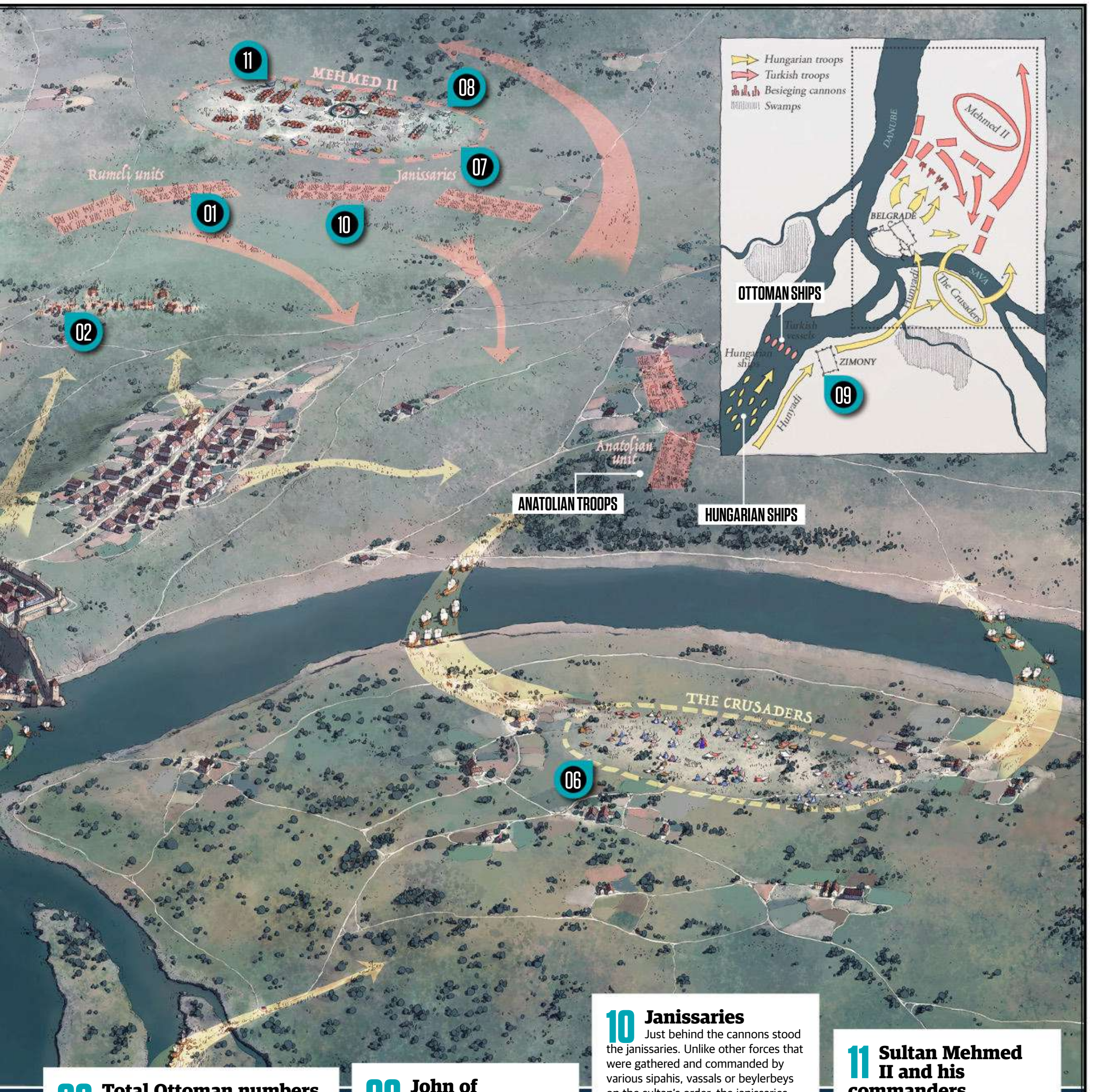
06 Crusader army

On the other side of the Sava River camped the Crusader army, comprising some 50,000 men that had arrived at Zemun earlier. Even though they were eager to fight, Hunyadi forbade their transfer to the city, threatening the death penalty if he was disobeyed. He thought that too many unreliable and inexperienced men in the fortress and on the battlefield might actually harm his chances of victory.

07 The death toll

During the siege the sultan lost his aide Karadza, who perished in the battle, as did the commander of the janissaries. The Ottoman losses are estimated to be from several thousand to tens of thousands; the Christians suffered heavily as well, less from the bombing and more from the battle on 21 and 22 July. The sultan also lost his entire fleet of 200 ships. Some of them were sunk by Hunyadi during the river battle, while other ships were burned on the orders of the sultan so as not to fall into enemy hands following their retreat.

Siege of Belgrade



08 **Total Ottoman numbers**
Variable sources estimate the size of the sultan's army from 100,000 to 300,000 people, with later sources typically providing higher numbers. If any of these figures are to be taken seriously, the lowest figure would perhaps be the upper limit, which would also include some women and children that the sultan took to the campaign, apparently with the intention to settle some of them permanently in the newly acquired lands.

09 **John of Capistrano**
Capistrano remained in Zemun for the most part, receiving the Crusaders and performing the strategically vital task of organising the arrival and accommodation of all these men. However, in critical moments the firebrand friar led his men at the fortress, much like Hunyadi.

10 **Janissaries**
Just behind the cannons stood the janissaries. Unlike other forces that were gathered and commanded by various sipahis, vassals or beylerbeys on the sultan's order, the janissaries were professional soldiers maintained by the sultan himself. Many of them were born Orthodox Christians who had been taken at the early age as a 'blood levy' to Edirne and later Constantinople, converted to Islam and turned to professional soldiers. They bore the brunt of the fighting and suffered heavy casualties.

11 **Sultan Mehmed II and his commanders**
The majority of the sultan's army occupied the area just beneath the city walls. Among them was the sultan himself, whose tent was on higher ground, enabling a full view over the entire army. On the sultan's left flank, alongside the Sava riverbank, were the tents of the beylerbeys (commanders) of the Asian units.

Map by: Rocio Espin

What If...

ABLE ARCHER 83 HAD TURNED TO WAR?

With NATO mounting a training exercise for launching a nuclear strike, the Soviet Union thought it was the real thing and prepared to retaliate

Interview by David J Williamson

INTERVIEW WITH

TAYLOR DOWNING

Taylor is a historian, writer, broadcaster and author of *1983 – The World at the Brink*. His latest book, *1942 – Britain at the Brink*, on the military disasters and political crises of 1942, was published in January

©Charlie Hopkinson

As a regular NATO exercise, Able Archer was the supreme war game: to play out the processes of taking the US and NATO forces into a nuclear war with the Soviet Union. But 1983 was no ordinary year, with tension and mistrust between the two nuclear superpowers reaching dangerous levels. On the night of 9 November 1983, convinced Able Archer was cover to launch a real attack, Yuri Andropov, the ill and paranoid Soviet leader, placed his finger firmly on the nuclear button ready to push the whole planet into nuclear oblivion.

How different was the Cold War in 1983 to previous decades?

It's easy to see the Cold War as one continuous, unchanging period of ideological and political confrontation; in fact, there were many different phases to it. Coming out of WWII, the initial tensions and the descent of the Iron Curtain came when the US still had a monopoly in nuclear weapons. But when the Soviet Union caught up and tested its own atomic bomb in 1949, the balance of power became more like a balance of terror. Throughout the 1950s both sides built up vast nuclear arsenals and exploded ever bigger thermonuclear bombs. This phase culminated in the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, when the US and the Soviet Union tried to stare each other down over the siting of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba. After this, Washington and Moscow realised they had to 'cool it' to avoid another direct confrontation. There followed, slowly at first but then with more and more momentum, a period of détente. This was symbolised by the docking in space of the Apollo and Soyuz space missions in 1975 and the collaboration of US and Soviet astronauts in joint exercises above the Earth. But by the end of the 1970s this détente was breaking down and both sides were growing more suspicious of each other.

What role did the US and Soviet leaders take in raising tensions and what agendas did they have? Could this have influenced how military exercises were done?

Ronald Reagan became president in 1981 on a strongly anti-Soviet ticket. He believed the Soviets had used the years of détente as an opportunity to re-arm. Reagan called the Soviet Union "an evil empire" and talked about building a protective shield over North America to intercept incoming missiles, his 'Star Wars' initiative. This would have given the United States a huge advantage over the Soviets. The central belief of the Cold War was of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) – that neither side would attack the other with nuclear weapons because they knew there would be instant retaliation and it would be an act of suicide. But if you could protect your own country from missiles then there would be a greater temptation to launch a first strike.

RIGHT
Soviet SS-20 ICBMs were in place and ready for launch

© Alamy

Main image sources: © Alamy, © Getty Images

NASA
CHALLENGER

THE PAST

1981

STAR WARS AND THE 'EVIL EMPIRE'

Ronald Reagan won the White House with strong hardline rhetoric against the Soviet Union. They were the "Evil Empire" and the complete opposite of all America stood for. The Soviets had been falling behind the US in the technology stakes, and with the proposed Strategic Defence Initiative (a satellite-based anti-missile system nicknamed 'Star Wars'), the US would be able to shoot down Soviet warheads before they could reach their targets. Mutual Assured Destruction, which had kept the balance of nuclear power, no longer seemed mutual or assured. The Soviet Union started to see the US bogeyman around every corner.

1981-83

OPERATION RYAN

Yuri Andropov, head of the KGB (and soon to be the Soviet leader), and the rest of the Soviet hierarchy were convinced that Reagan's administration was planning a surprise pre-emptive nuclear strike. Under the codename RYAN, a huge information gathering exercise began, using agents and resources all around the globe. They tracked the movements and behaviour of those closest to the decision-making process for a nuclear first-strike, looking for clues to what they had already convinced themselves was the American plan. They were so convinced, it led to a tragic accident that raised the political temperature almost to boiling point.

SEPTEMBER 1983

TRIGGER-HAPPY TRAGEDY

US military bombers had played cat and mouse with Soviet airspace on many occasions, turning away at the last minute to test the radar tracking and defence responses. This only fuelled the Soviet belief of a surprise attack and, when a Korean Airlines Boeing 747 made navigation errors and crossed into Soviet airspace, jets were scrambled. Jumbled communication and obsession over a US first strike were to prove fatal, and KAL 007 was shot down by two air-to-air missiles. The hawks in the White House wanted an immediate military response, to no avail. It was to be two months later that the world was to stand on the edge of the abyss.

In the early 1980s the Kremlin leadership knew they were falling behind the West both economically and – more crucially – technologically. They came to believe that Reagan's aggressive language and US technological superiority betrayed a desire to launch a first strike against them. They grew paranoid, looking for signs of an imminent attack everywhere. By 1983 the Soviet leaders were feeling very edgy and tense.

Was Able Archer 83 more provocative than previous exercises to purposefully take things to the brink with the USSR?

Able Archer was a regular NATO exercise held every couple of years to rehearse the protocols for launching nuclear weapons. Every exercise was different but in essence it was a war game in which NATO faced defeat in a conventional war with the Warsaw Pact as Soviet and East European tanks came thrusting across into Western Europe. NATO responded by asking the political leadership for permission to launch nuclear weapons. Quite often the politicians in London and Washington DC took part in the exercise – they also had to know what to do should such a request ever be made to them. But in 1983 it was decided that the situation was too tense and so neither President Reagan nor Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher were involved. So no, Able Archer 1983 was not intended to be any more provocative than usual.

In 1983 was an 'accidental war' more or less likely? And were the fail-safe systems, especially the human element, enough to avoid it?

It was a supremely dangerous year in which a series of events seriously raised the temperature between East and West. Most obvious was the shooting down of a Korean civilian airliner, flight KAL 007, by a Soviet fighter plane on 1 September after it'd strayed off course by about 560km and ended up crossing Soviet airspace above a sensitive military area. Reagan couldn't believe this was a case of mistaken identity, a tragic accident that caused the deaths of 269 innocent people. He called the Soviet Union "a terrorist state" that showed no regard for human life.

I argue that at this point the Cold War nearly went 'hot' as some in Washington demanded a military retaliation against the Soviet Union. When situations are this tense it is always possible that one side will misinterpret what the other side is doing. In the end, the safety of all nuclear systems is reliant upon the human factor – it is a politician or military leader who finally has to respond to threats perceived or real and press the nuclear button. So no matter how sophisticated the fail-safe systems are, it is down to a person to make the final decision – and all humans are fallible.

ABOVE
The annual Autumn Forge exercise (of which Able Archer was a part) had been run by NATO since the 1960s. Pictured here is the 1969 operation

Could the events leading up to Able Archer 83 be seen as an example of fake news and 'convenient' intelligence to suit a purpose? Or just a lack of competence?

There was genuine tension between the two superpowers in 1983. Both were deeply suspicious of the other and both believed that events confirmed their own understanding of the hostility or irresponsibility of the other side.

This was made worse by the lack of any effective communication between the superpower rivals. The Soviets had no real understanding of how Reagan and his administration thought and whether they were genuinely hostile to them or just acting up. Likewise, the Washington leaders and the

intelligence community in the US had absolutely no idea of how paranoid and fearful the Soviet leaders had become and how vulnerable they felt. What every state needs from its intelligence establishment is an understanding of how the other side is likely to behave – especially if it is about to launch an attack upon you. But neither the CIA nor the KGB had the slightest understanding of the other. This is a real lesson for today. If we have no idea how, say, the leaders of North Korea or Iran are thinking then the possibility for misunderstanding is immense.

What if the Soviets had reacted to Able Archer 83 with conventional weapons either through choice or accident? Was a conventional conflict a possibility and would it have automatically escalated to nuclear?
Throughout the decades of Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union were careful never to confront each other directly. Their hostility to each other was expressed through a series of 'proxy wars'. Each side would arm and equip an ally but avoid directly confronting the other side. These proxy wars took place in Africa (in Angola and Ethiopia), in Latin America (the Contras versus the Sandinistas in Nicaragua) and most obviously in the Middle East (Israel versus the Arab states). The Yom Kippur War of October 1973 produced a particularly tense moment when the US military was put on to a maximum state of alert and readiness. Even when the US was directly involved in a war (as in Korea or Vietnam) the Soviets were very careful not to give overt support to their enemies.

So, in my mind, any conventional war fought directly between the two superpowers would always have escalated into a nuclear confrontation. As soon as one side gained an advantage over the other, the side that felt it was losing would have had no alternative but to resort to the nuclear option. It is impossible to imagine that open conflict between Washington and Moscow could ever have remained a purely conventional war. It would almost certainly have led to a nuclear holocaust.

TOP
Pershing II missiles could reach Moscow within minutes

ABOVE
President Reagan's rhetoric fuelled Soviet suspicions of a surprise attack

THE POSSIBILITY

9 NOV 1983

FIRST BLOOD

Both sides had plans for limited nuclear strikes against missile sites or military bases, but it is inconceivable that it would have ended there. It is possible that Soviet first strikes might have been made against Western Europe and US strikes against Eastern European targets, leaving the principal protagonists untouched. But the pressure to avenge the total destruction of an ally meant war would've escalated. And likewise if, for instance, the Soviets had destroyed a single American city, like Atlanta, Georgia, and the US had only nuked Minsk in Belarus, it would never have ended there.

10 NOV 1983

MAD, MAD, MAD

There could be no winner of a nuclear war. Very few living things would have survived a nuclear exchange between the superpowers. These attacks would have triggered massive retaliation using the vast nuclear arsenals possessed by both superpowers, resulting in the Mutual Assured Destruction that had previously kept the peace for so long. Tens if not hundreds of millions of men, women and children would have died as a direct result of the huge destruction caused by nuclear explosions. Some American military leaders boasted they could blast the Soviet Union back into the Stone Age, but in truth neither side would have escaped such a fate.

DEC 1983

NOWHERE TO HIDE

It was well known at the time that a nuclear exchange would have thrown so much radiation into the atmosphere that this would have blown around the world, bringing what was called a 'nuclear winter' to the whole planet. Clouds of radioactive rain would have blown from continent to continent, crops would have failed, and people would have suffered from radiation sickness in parts of the world like southern Africa or Australasia that had not suffered direct nuclear hits.

6x © Alamy

Through History

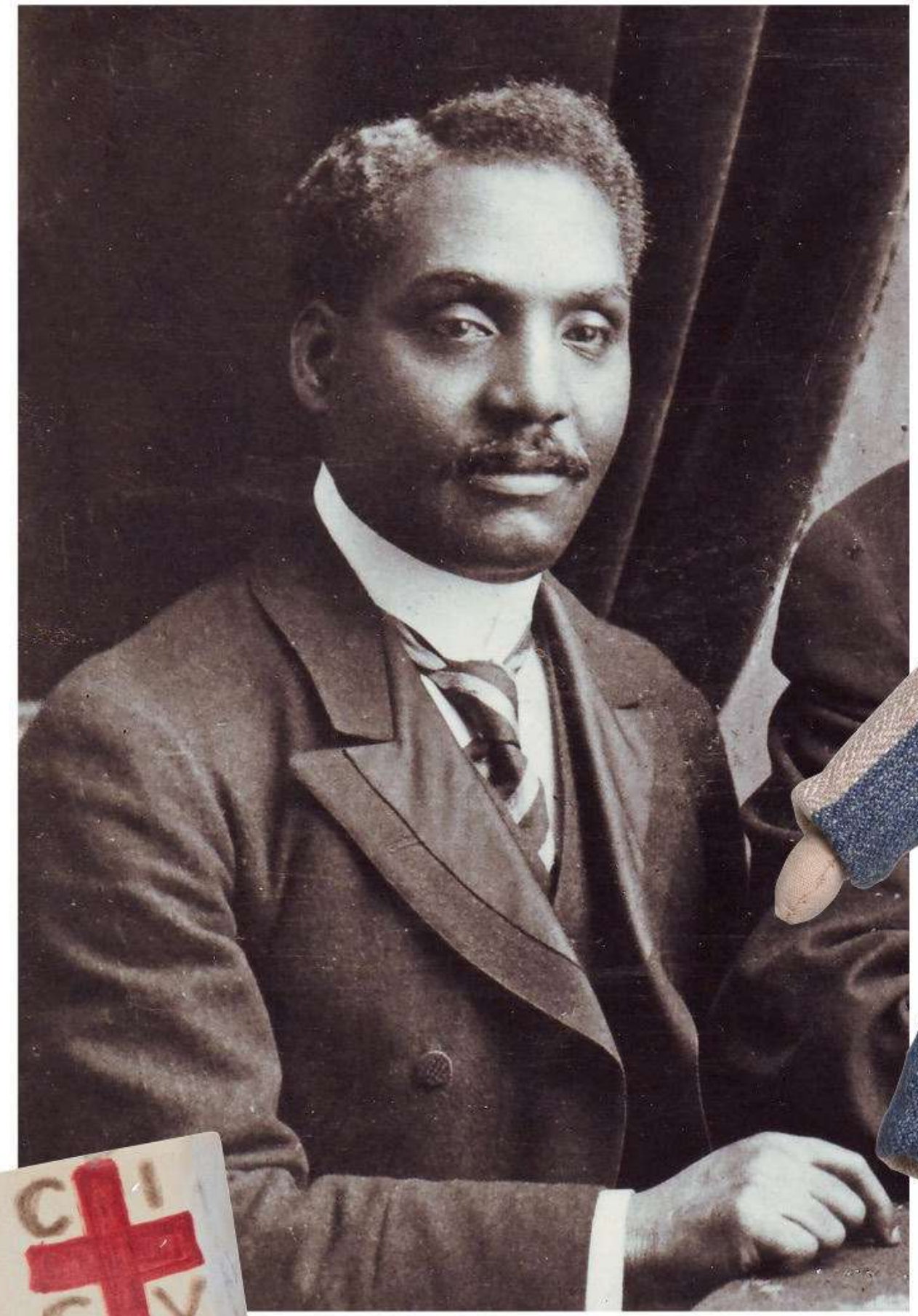
THE MUSEUM OF KINDNESS

A new museum celebrates over 150 years of the British Red Cross and explores the support it's provided during numerous conflicts and disasters

In 1859, Swiss businessman Henry Dunant witnessed the wholesale slaughter and suffering of thousands at the Battle of Solferino, the final engagement of the Second Italian War of Independence. His experiences at the battle led him to develop the idea of organisations, formed by separate countries, that helping the sick and wounded of all sides. Four years later his idea came to fruition when the International Committee of the Red Cross was founded. In 1870 the British National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War was born, and was renamed the British Red Cross in 1905. Over 150 years later and the organisation has provided help to countless individuals in both the First and Second World Wars as well as numerous other conflicts.

To celebrate its work, the British Red Cross has made available to view a number of rare and exciting artefacts from throughout its history. The exhibition at the headquarters of the British Red Cross in London explores eight key themes integral to the organisation's history. These are: the Red Cross's origins, the beginning of the British Red Cross, the First and Second World Wars, refugees and displacement, disaster response and preparedness, first aid training, and health and social care. Across the following pages are number of the most exciting and interesting objects from the museum.

All images: © British Red Cross Museum and Archives

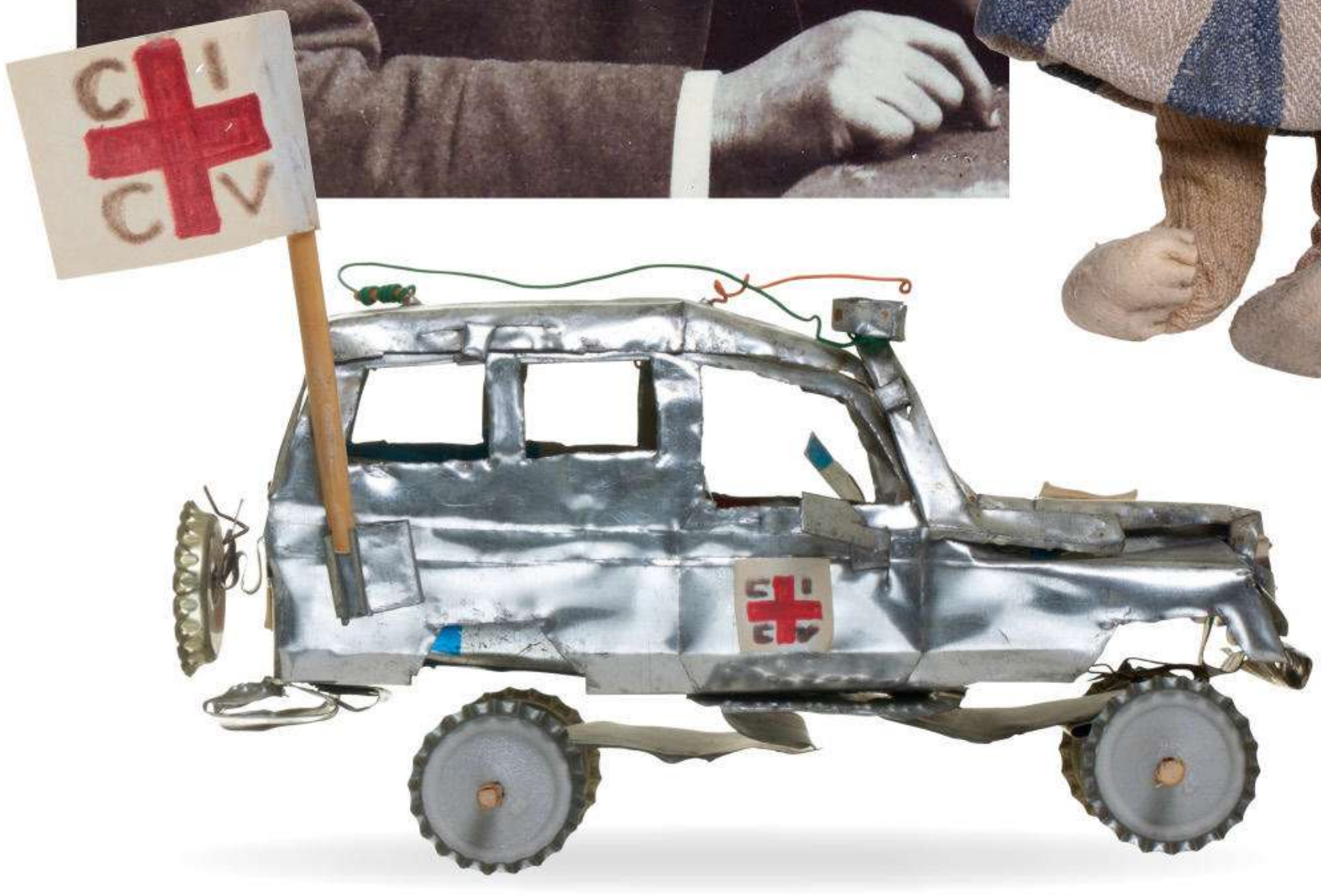


DR JOHN ALCINDOR

Originally from Trinidad, Dr John Alcindor obtained his medical degree from Edinburgh University in 1899. When WWI began he applied to join the Royal Army Medical Corps but was rejected due to his 'colonial origin'. Instead he joined the Red Cross and was awarded a Red Cross Medal for his life-saving work.

DOLL MADE BY A BERGEN-BELSEN SURVIVOR

Established in 1940, Bergen-Belsen became a concentration camp in 1943 and within its walls some 50,000 were put to death by the Nazis. This doll was made by one of Belsen's survivors and was gifted to a Red Cross volunteer as a thank you.



MODEL RED CROSS TRUCK

This model Red Cross truck was constructed by children in Angola out of empty food tins. Beginning in 1975, the Angolan Civil War continued for 27 years until finally a peace settlement was reached in 2002. Among other work, the Red Cross was instrumental in reuniting many separated families.

CHANGI QUILT

An example of a Changi quilt, these were made by women interred in Changi prison by the Japanese following the fall of Singapore in WWII. Each woman was asked to put 'something of herself' into the square they embroidered. Three quilts were made: one is at the British Red Cross, the other two quilts are held by the Australian war memorial in Canberra.

FIRST AID KIT FROM THE ABERFAN DISASTER

On 21 October 1966 a landslide of coal waste crashed into the school in Aberfan, killing 116 children and 28 adults. This first aid kit was used by 21-year-old Red Cross volunteer John Cole during the response to the disaster.

THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE MEDAL

Introduced by the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1912, the Florence Nightingale Medal is still awarded to nurses and nursing aides who have been deemed to provide exceptional support and care. Nightingale was one of Dunant's inspirations and she herself joined the British branch of the organisation when it was formed in 1870.

PFIZER-BIONTECH COVID-19 VACCINE

One of the latest items to enter the museum's collection, this is an empty vial of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine from one of the vaccination centres where the British Red Cross supported the NHS vaccination programme. It also assisted during the pandemic by delivering food and medicine, helping refugees and giving health advice.

-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine
dilution, vial contains 6 doses of 0.3 mL
ramuscular use. Contains no preservative.
e under Emergency Use Authorization.
E BEFORE USE.
d 6 hours after dilution when
at 2 to 25°C (35 to 77°F).
n date and time:
NDC 59267-1000-1

HENRY DUNANT

The Swiss businessman who founded the Red Cross, Henry Dunant entered the world of business as a representative of Compagnie Genevoise des Colonies de Sétif, a farming enterprise. However, he was also an accomplished author, writing *An Account of the Regency in Tunis* (1858) and most famously *A Memory of Solferino* (1862), which led directly to the foundation of the Red Cross.

REVIEWS

The books, TV shows and films causing a stir in the history world this month

2x Image credit: Frederic Batier / NETFLIX

Image credit: Sarah M. Lee / NETFLIX

MUNICH – THE EDGE OF WAR

A classy and gripping period thriller with a fatalistic flavour

Certificate: 12A **Director:** Christian Schwochow **Cast:** Jeremy Irons, George MacKay, Jannis Niewöhner **Released:** Out now

Christian Schwochow's *Munich – The Edge of War* is based on the 2017 novel by Robert Harris; the subtitle has been added to the movie adaptation presumably so the audience doesn't confuse it with the 2005 Steven Spielberg blockbuster about the 1972 murders of the Israeli Olympic squad by terror cell Black September. Harris, a former award-winning journalist, has made a name for himself as a popular writer of historical fiction. He has long held an interest in World War II and British PM Neville Chamberlain, and fronted a 1988 BBC documentary examining the 50th anniversary of the Munich Agreement.

Any story, especially the recreation of a real-life event where the outcome is well known in advance, boasts an inherently fatalistic flavour. We know the Munich Agreement – infamously described as "peace for our time" by Chamberlain – proved worthless. Within a year, Europe was plunged into its second global conflict, the aftermath of which reverberates into the present day. Harris's tale enhances the fatalism with a fictional race-against-time narrative, delivered by German director Schwochow with consummate craftsman-like élan. *Munich – The Edge of War* grips not because we know it will end in calamity, but because of its clever plotting and interpersonal dramas between characters. The main focus of these dramas are a civil servant acting as a translator on the British delegation and his counterpart on the German side, who has found out all about Hitler's plans for Europe and is trying to sound the alarm. But will anyone listen?

At the centre of the film is a terrific performance by Jeremy Irons as Chamberlain. The film's take on the PM, generally seen as a weak leader who served Hitler Europe on a plate by appeasing him, is more charitable and nuanced. Of course, if you give a despot an inch they'll take a Sudetenland, and then a Poland, but the PM is truly caught in a tough bind and Irons is on top form as a politician having to play, as he puts it, "the hand I've been dealt." Equally, he is guilty of overconfidence and blindness to the bigger picture. He knows Hitler is not to be trusted but appears to genuinely believe the Nazi psychopath will stick to his word. Harris, and clearly the director too, see Chamberlain as a good man who believed in diplomacy to solve a political crisis and who bought valuable time for the UK.

Alongside Irons is George MacKay, in a bland performance, but the German cast is excellent, including August Diehl, Sandra Hüller and Jannis Niewöhner. Schwochow's decision to have his German actors speak their native language rather than have them using accented English also pays dividends in terms of immersion and verisimilitude. Additionally, the handsome production makes fantastic use of period-specific locations in the UK and Germany, such as the Führerbau, where the actual signing took place in September 1938. *Munich – The Edge of War* is a homage to honourable men trying to do the right thing. ***MC***

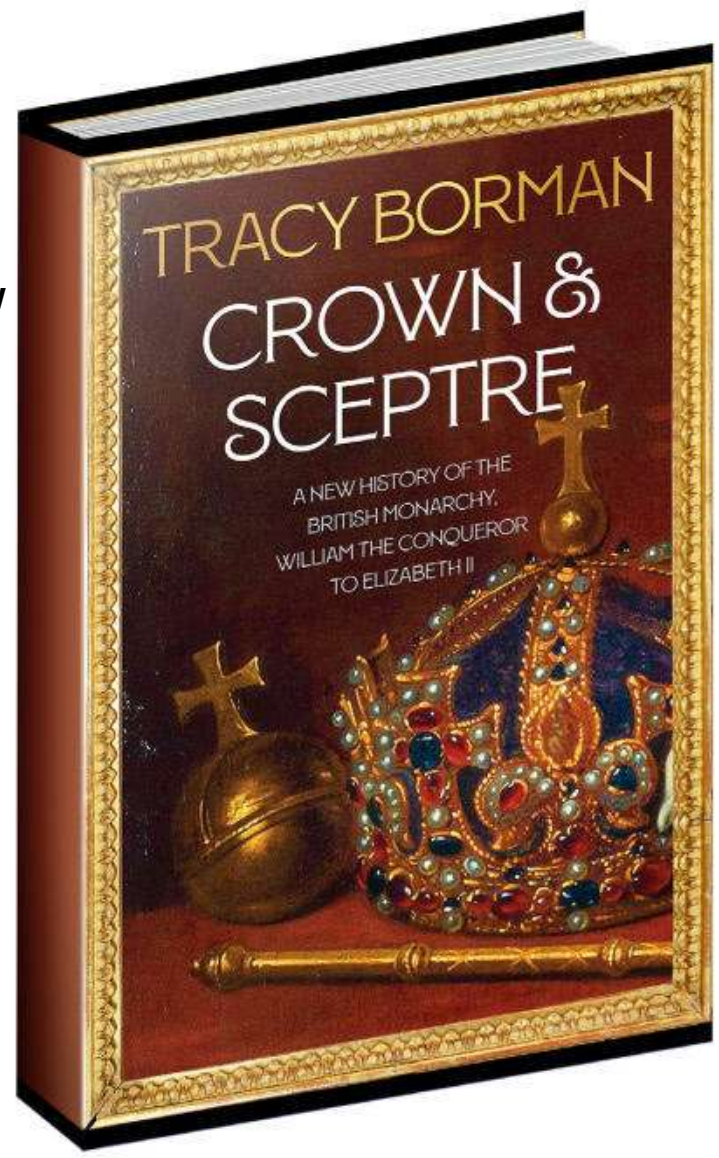
★★★★☆

Reviews by
Martyn Conterio, Catherine Curzon, Mallory James

CROWN & SCEPTRE

An authoritative biography of the British monarchy

Author: Tracy Borman **Publisher:** Hodder & Stoughton **Price:** £25 **Released:** Out now

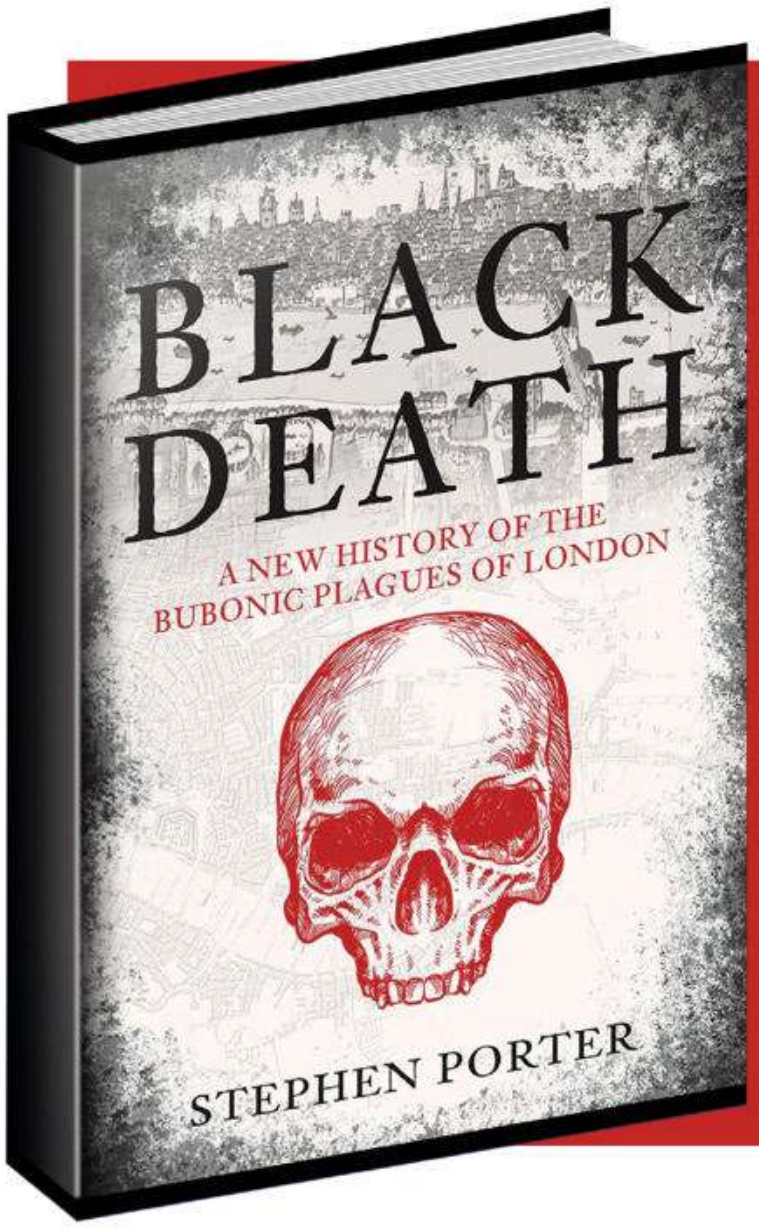


There have been many biographies of British monarchs, but in *Crown & Sceptre* Tracy Borman has set out to achieve what might seem like the impossible: a biography of the British monarchy itself, from William the Conqueror to Queen Elizabeth II. Beginning in 1066 and ending in the modern era, this timely work is a fascinating exploration of an ever-changing and evolving institution and a portrait of the world around it.

Borman has divided the book by dynasty, and each individual dynasty into chapters. Each of these chapters is a potted biography of a monarch, leading to a comprehensive compendium of royal life stories. These biographies are equally fascinating taken individually or as part of Borman's impressive tapestry that tells the story of the British monarchy and its continual evolution. *Crown & Sceptre* is not only a book about British royalty but also a fascinating study of the identity of the nation itself, from culture to religion and beyond.

This could easily have become an unwieldy book, sinking under the weight of its own ambition and the sheer number of players, but in Borman's capable hands *Crown & Sceptre* is anything but overwhelming. It is a masterfully crafted work that will fascinate anyone with an interest in the history of the monarchy or Great Britain as a whole. It delves beneath the mystique and ancient protocol to examine the deeper meaning of monarchy and the sometimes gritty realities faced by those who wear the crown. Readers will be richly rewarded by this splendid book. ***CC***

★★★★★



BLACK DEATH

A history of London's battle with the bubonic plague

Author: Stephen Porter **Publisher:** Amberley **Price:** £14.99 **Released:** Out now

Stephen Porter's *Black Death* is subtitled *A New History of the Bubonic Plagues of London,* and it certainly lives up to its billing. With plague pits still being unearthed in London to this day and the whole world currently navigating the Covid-19 pandemic, this is a timely examination of the capital's various battles against the bubonic plague.

The book begins with a couple of primers to familiarise readers with the plague and the history of London. From its Roman origins, Porter paints a portrait of a city that grows at an exponential rate and as it does, creates the perfect environment for a plague to flourish. Once the stage is suitably set, he embarks on a narrative history of the disease's various and ruinous descents on the city and Europe as a whole.

There is no doubt that this is an exhaustively researched work and though there are a lot of statistics for the reader to grapple with, Porter tries to balance these with a look at the devastating impact of plague on wider society and the human stories that emerged. Though this isn't always successful, what emerges from *Black Death* is a vivid portrait of a city on the edge of calamity in which its inhabitants were driven to extremes of humanity and inhumanity alike.

Black Death is heavy with statistics and may not appeal to the casual reader, but those with an academic interest in the subject or the history of disease will likely find much to enjoy. ***CC***

★★★☆☆

Out now!

Anglo Saxons

In All About History Book of the Anglo-Saxons, uncover how seven separate kingdoms slowly joined together, and find out why King Alfred became known as 'the Great'. Explore what life was really like, and meet the deadly Viking raiders who managed to conquer part of England. Get up close and personal with the final Anglo-Saxon kings, and reveal what really happened in the last days before everything changed forever...

Buy *Anglo Saxons* in shops or online at **magazinesdirect.com**
Price: £10.99

HISTORY of WAR **RECOMMENDS...**

Out now!

Hostile Participants

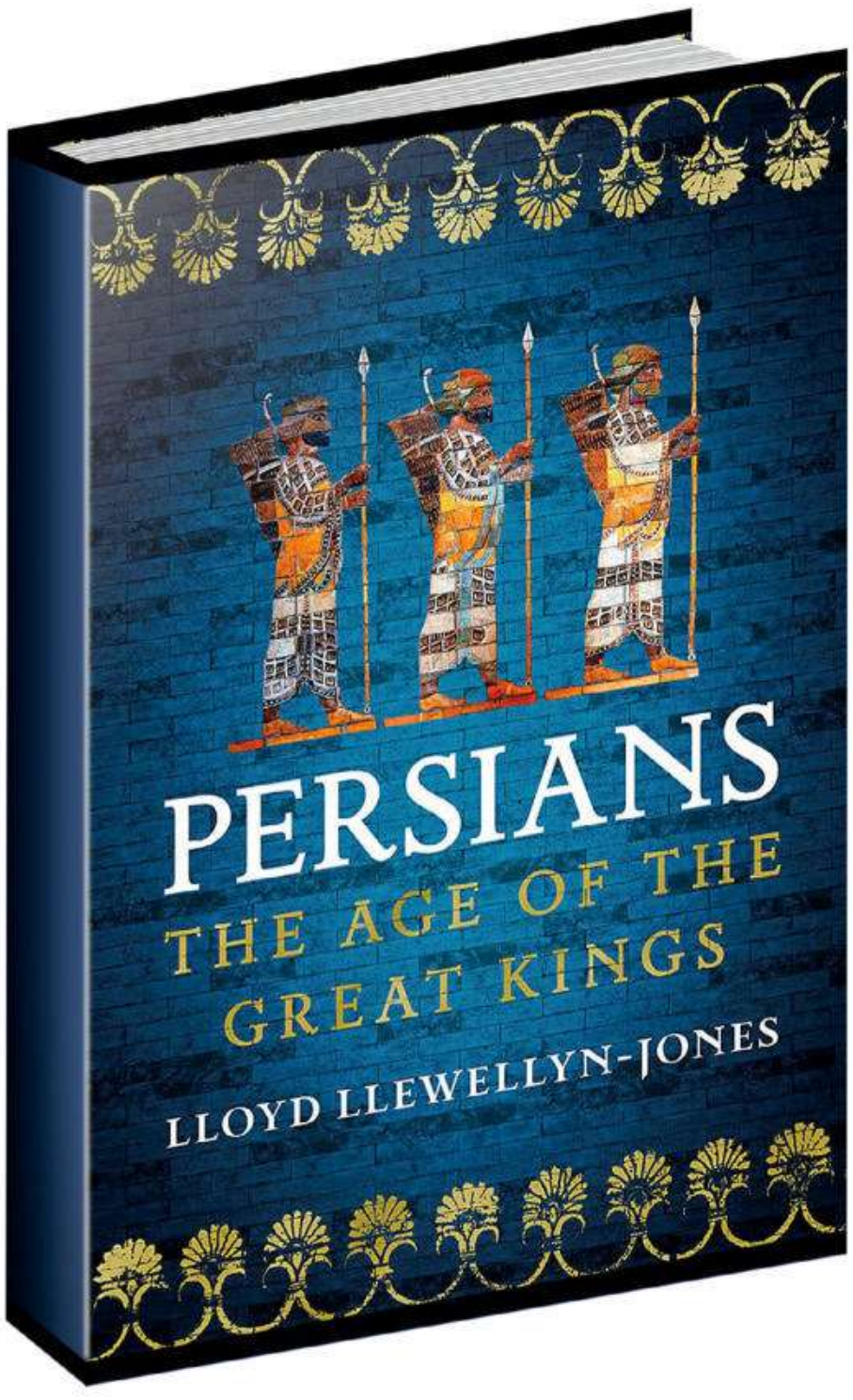
Author Miguel Miranda **Price** £7.25 **Publisher** Lime Tree Press

The backdrop for Miranda's tale of intrigue and close-quarter combat is the city of Manila and the island of Luzon in the Philippines during the Philippine-American War. Miranda presents a gripping story, one with a depth of character development that is seldom experienced in historical fiction. He offers a glimpse behind the diverse veneers of individuals, from the adventurer to the ne'er do well, an otherwise innocuous shopkeeper, and a blustering officer sending soldiers to their mixed bag of fates.

PERSIANS THE AGE OF THE GREAT KINGS

Explore the history of this extraordinary ancient empire

Author: Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones **Publisher:** Wildfire **Price:** £25 **Released:** April 2022



"This is a story of regal splendour, courtly intrigue and struggles for power"

Meticulously researched, *Persians: The Age of The Great Kings* tells the extraordinary story of this superpower of the ancient world. In a narrative that reaches back thousands of years and across vast stretches of land, Professor Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones presents a skilful and engaging history of the powerful Achaemenid dynasty.

In particular, this history of the Great Kings seeks to rebalance and reexamine the sources from which it is drawn. It moves away from the writings of the Ancient Greeks, such as Herodotus, and raises questions about how those writings might be best read, understood and placed into context. Llewellyn-Jones endeavours to place Persian sources – from administrative memos to art and archeological findings – at the centre of the story. The urgent notes written by bureaucrats from long ago echo with a particular vibrancy.

From the rules of etiquette when dining and hunting to the structure and significance of the harem, this is a story of regal splendour, courtly intrigue and titanic struggles for power. It is also a history of expansion, rebellion and oppression. The story of the Great Kings is placed alongside those who suffered and were exploited, forcibly relocated and enslaved. It highlights how labouring men, women and children were allotted scarcely enough food to survive, and that Babylonia was required to provide 500 castrated boys as a tribute to the king each year. At times it makes for challenging reading.

The Achaemenid monarchs ruled over a territory that encompassed Egypt, Ethiopia and the Steppes of Asia. Structured in three parts, *Persians* adopts a clear framework for its exploration of this diverse, extensive empire. The first part is a narrative history, commencing with the rise of Cyrus the Great and the founding of the empire in 550 BCE. The second focuses more on questions of culture, society and identity. The third section returns to the earlier narrative, continuing to the conquests of Alexander the Great and the eventual fall of the largest empire of the ancient world. Each part brings to the fore engaging and compelling insights. There is (for instance) an interesting discussion of ancient language and enduring linguistic links. In addition, Llewellyn-Jones also explores the postal system and coinage (the latter being the first example of this in history).

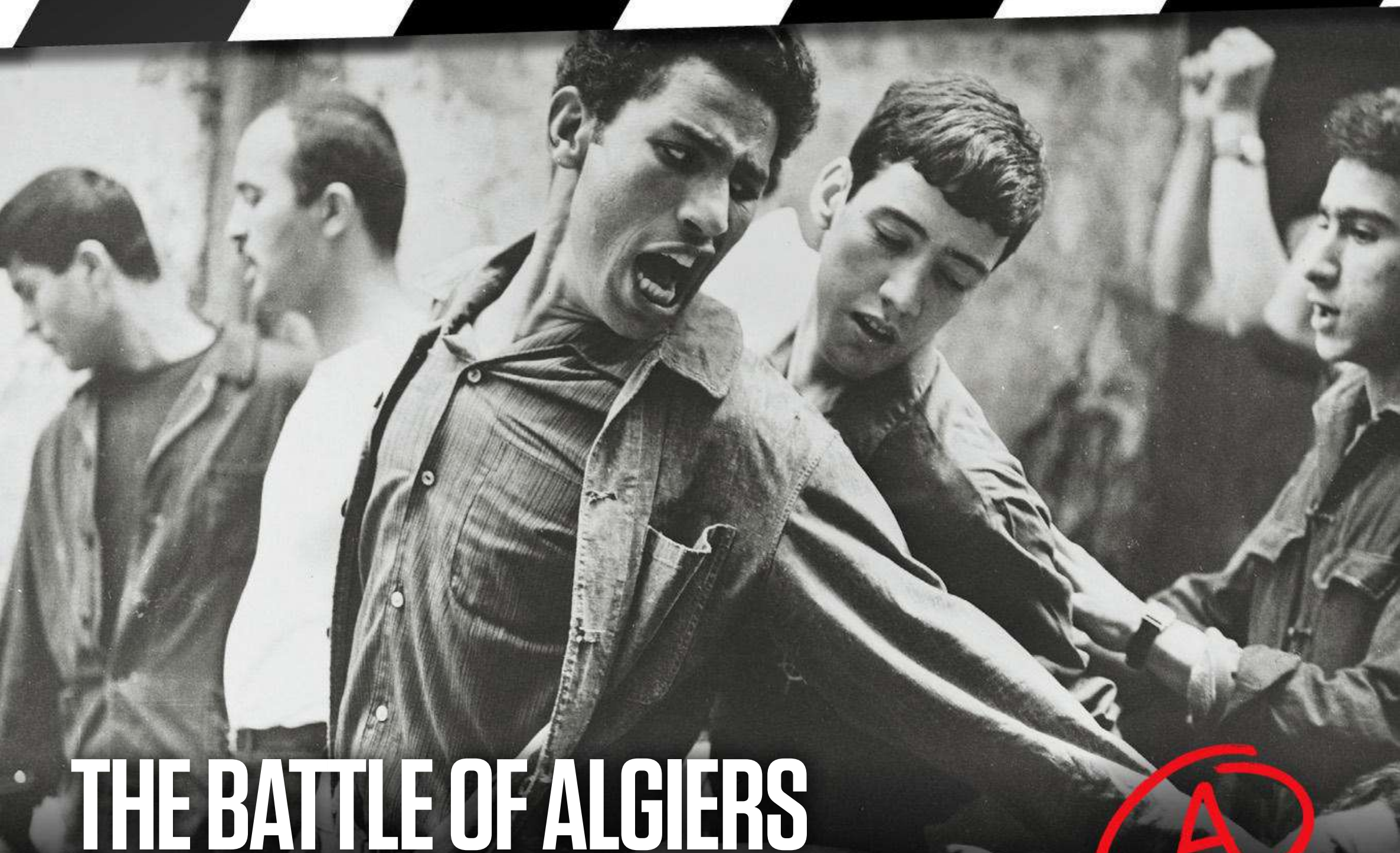
Among the final pages of the book there is a guide to key figures, and the main text is supported with a number of illustrations. The list of texts for further reading also includes a short comment against each, and *Persians* will no doubt inspire many of its readers to explore more books about this fascinating subject.

Persians is a wide-ranging and detailed examination of the lives of the Great Kings and the world in which they lived. It will naturally appeal to those interested in this subject in particular, or the ancient world more generally. However, it also offers a compelling introduction to the period and will likely find a broader readership among those keen to reexamine the topic. ***MJ***

★★★★☆

HISTORY VS HOLLYWOOD

Fact versus fiction on the silver screen



THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS

Director: Gillo Pontecorvo **Starring:** Jean Martin, Saadi Yacef, Brahim Haggiag **Country:** Algeria **Released:** 1966

A groundbreaking examination of terrorism, colonialism and the people caught in the middle

VERDICT: Walks a line between narrative and documentary to amazing effect

01 The film was made in 1965 in the Algiers Casbah, where the events depicted had taken place only a few years earlier in 1956-57. All the streets and buildings are likely the same and the people walking around are residents of this area who saw these things first-hand.

02 We follow the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) as it carries out terror attacks on French colonial targets. One of the first involves three women planting bombs in French bars and offices. This is based on a real coordinated bombing attack in September 1956.

03 Saadi Yacef plays FLN leader Jafar. This character is fictional but Yacef was an actual FLN leader and this film is based on his memoir. The French colonel, Philippe Mathieu, is an amalgamation of figures but the actor Jean Martin was a French veteran.

04 The French are shown torturing FLN suspects. The French denied this at the time and the film was banned in France for many years as a result. In 2001 General Paul Aussaresses, who served in the conflict, released a memoir that admitted to these acts.

05 One of the key figures of the film, Ali-la-Pointe, is killed by French authorities while he hides with some comrades and a child who sent messages for him. The French blew up the building with Ali-la-Pointe and the others still inside, as shown by the film.

Main image: © Alamy
5x inset image source: Cult Films/Prime Video

Did you know?

'Budae-jjigae' literally translates to 'army base stew'

All images: © Alamy

BUDAE-JJIGAE

THE FUSION ARMY STEW, SOUTH KOREA, 1953 – PRESENT

In the aftermath of the Korean War in the early 1950s, the country was divided. While the North turned into what is known today as the hermit kingdom, the South was more open. The United States had been heavily involved in the conflict, and troops stayed behind as the military stand-off showed no sign of ending.

There was an American army base in Uijeongbu near Seoul, and the soldiers stationed there had some of their home comforts such as canned beans, meat and Spam. Many of these items were completely new to post-war Koreans, but in a time when food was scarce parts of American cuisine began to be adopted by the local population. One of the results of this was a dish that's still popular today: budae-jjigae.

While many versions of this dish are served all across Korea, this is a slightly simplified version – but no less delicious! Other vegetables can be added, like mushrooms and Napa cabbage, and some recipes use baked beans and are served over white rice.

Ingredients

- 1 can luncheon meat (like Spam)
- 400g smoked sausage, sliced
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 170g kimchi
- 32g (¼ cup) Korean red pepper powder
- 3 tbsp soy sauce
- 3 tbsp gochujang
- 5 cloves of garlic, minced
- Ground black pepper
- 1 bunch of green onions, chopped
- 1,800ml chicken broth
- 220g ramen noodles
- 1 slice of American cheese

METHOD

01 Slice the luncheon meat and place it into a stock pot. Layer the sausage, onion and kimchi on top, making sure to leave an empty space in the middle. If you're looking for a meat-free alternative, tofu works well.

02 In a small bowl, mix together your red pepper powder, gochujang, garlic and black pepper. If you have it available, you can also add soy sauce, fish sauce and rice wine to your stock. For those looking for a bit of heat, try adding some more red pepper powder.

03 Pour the mixture into the centre of your stock pot, add the chopped green onion and bring to the boil. Then reduce the heat and simmer for about ten minutes, stirring occasionally.

04 Bring a separate pot of water to the boil. When ready, add your ramen noodles (or rice if you prefer). Boil and stir for about two minutes – the noodles should only be partially cooked and softened.

05 Drain the noodles and add them to the simmering stew. Allow it to cook for five minutes, stirring occasionally. Your ramen noodles should be tender but firm.

06 Top with a slice of American cheese and serve.

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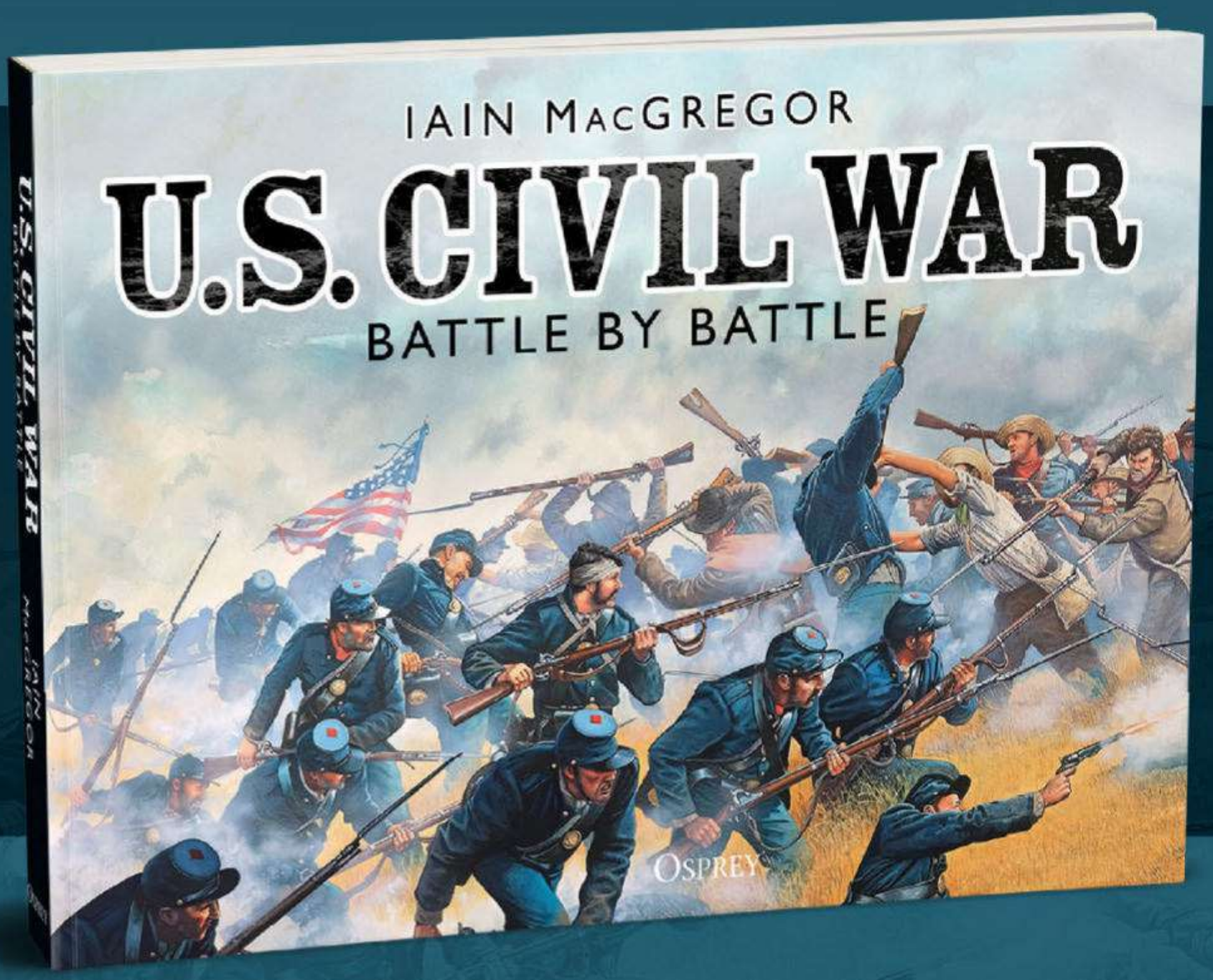

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